FIVE
SERMONS
On the following
SUBJECTS:
VIZ.

The Extreme Folly and Wretchedneſs of an Atheiſtic Inclination.

God's Government of the World a ſure and moſt joyful Truth.

The Dignities and Diſtinctions of Human Nature.

Natural and Moral Proofs of a Future State.

Preached in the Country, and publiſh'd at the Requeſt of a FRIEND.

By JOHN BALGUY, *M. A.* Vicar of *North-Allerton* in the County of *York*, and Prebendary of *Sarum*.

The SECOND EDITION.

To which is now added,

An ASSIZE SERMON,

Formerly preach'd, and printed at NEWCASTLE upon *Tyne*.

LONDON:
Printed for JOHN PEMBERTON, at the *Golden Buck* againſt St. *Dunſtan*'s Church in *Fleetſtreet*.
M DCC XXXIX.

BRITISH MUSEUM

695

To the REVEREND the

DEAN and CHAPTER of *DURHAM*,

THESE

DISCOURSES

Are humbly and gratefully Inſcrib'd

By their much obliged

and moſt devoted Servant,

The AUTHOR.

BRITISH MUSEUM

PREFACE.

IT *seems to be the fix'd Sentiment and Resolution of some Christians, if Reveal'd Religion could not, or should not, be effectually supported, to let Natural Religion sink with it. An Expedient, if I mistake not, as rash and desperate, as it would be for a Man, deprived of certain great and valuable Privileges, to throw up his Life along with them. Let it be supposed, (for a mere Supposition it is, and I am fully persuaded, ever will be) that Christianity should fail, and be disproved: Would the Consequence be fatal to all Religion? Would all natural Principles become incredible, or worthless? It may safely be affirmed, and easily proved; neither the one, nor the other. On which Account the forementioned Determination is Matter of Surprize, as well as Concern.—— I see not indeed how it is to be reconciled either with Christian Charity, or common Humanity. If some Men cannot be satisfied with the Evidences of Revelation, or will not duly attend to them; shall we therefore be so cruelly officious, as to hand them down into the Depths of Irreligion and Atheism? God forbid. On the contrary; till their Minds be more open to Conviction, let them be exhorted and assisted to hold fast those Princi-*

ples which they do acknowledge; and which are indeed the Fundamentals of all Religion. Whoever ſincerely believes a God, a Providence, and a Future State, is ſurely much more ſuſceptible of Chriſtianity, than he who is deſtitute of theſe eſſential Principles. It may therefore be propoſed and recommended to the former with much greater Hopes of Succeſs. In the one Caſe, we have only a Superſtructure to raiſe on firm Foundations; in the other we muſt either dig very deep, or build on a Quickſand.——On theſe, and ſeveral other Accounts, I apprehend, no Man can be miſemployed, who contributes, even in the loweſt Degree, to the Eſtabliſhment, or Illuſtration of Truths ſo greatly and univerſally momentous.

SER-

SERMON I.

PSAL. XIV. Part of the first Verse.

The Fool hath said in his Heart, there is no God.

OF all the false Doctrines, and foolish Opinions, which ever infested the Mind of Man, nothing can possibly equal that of Atheism; which is such a monstrous Contradiction to all Evidence, to all the Powers of Understanding, and the Dictates of common Sense, that it may well be questioned whether any Man can really fall into it by a deliberate Use of his Judgment.—— All Nature so clearly points out, and so loudly proclaims, a Creator of infinite Power, Wisdom, and Goodness; that whoever hears not its Voice, and sees not its Proofs, may well be thought wilfully deaf, and obstinately blind. If it be evident, self-evident, to every Man of Thought, that there can be no Effect without a Cause; what shall

we ſay of that manifold Combination of Effects, that Series of Operations, that Syſtem of Wonders, which fill the Univerſe; which preſent themſelves to all our Perceptions, and ſtrike our Minds and our Senſes on every Side! Every Faculty, every Object of every Faculty, demonſtrates a Deity. The meaneſt Inſect we can ſee, the minuteſt and moſt contemptible Weed we can tread upon, is really ſufficient to confound Atheiſm, and baffle all its Pretenſions. How much more that aſtoniſhing Variety and Multiplicity of God's Works with which we are continually ſurrounded! Let any Man ſurvey the Face of the Earth, or lift up his Eyes to the Firmament; let him conſider the Natures and Inſtincts of brute Animals, and afterwards look into the Operations of his own Mind: Will he preſume to ſay, or ſuppoſe, that all the Objects he meets with are nothing more than the Reſult of unaccountable Accidents, and blind Chance? Can he poſſibly conceive that ſuch wonderful Order ſhould ſpring out of Confuſion? Or that ſuch perfect Beauty ſhould be ever formed by the fortuitous Operations of unconſcious, unactive Particles of Matter? As well, nay better and more eaſily might he ſuppoſe, that an Earthquake might happen to build Towns and Cities; or the Materials carried down by a Flood fit themſelves up, without Hands, into a regular Fleet. For what are Towns, Cities, or Fleets, in compariſon of the vaſt and amazing

Fabric

Fabric of the Univerſe!—— In ſhort, the Principle ſpoken of in my Text offers ſuch Violence to all our Faculties, that it ſeems ſcarce credible it ſhould ever really find any Footing in human Underſtanding.

But is it not there expreſsly aſcribed to the fooliſh Man, and repreſented as his Opinion; which, though perhaps he may not think to ſpeak out, he whiſpers to himſelf, and *ſays it in his Heart?* But theſe Words, for a Reaſon already given, ſeem to require another Conſtruction; and will, I believe, fairly admit of it. For the *Heart* of Man is generally repreſented in Scripture as the Seat of his Affections, rather than of his Judgment. Conformably whereto, the Expreſſion in my Text may denote, not the Man's real Opinion or Perſuaſion, but his Inclination and Deſire. He ſecretly wiſhes that there was no God, and endeavours to draw his Belief that Way as much as he can.——If the Words be thus underſtood, as they well may, the Subject ariſing from them will be the extreme Folly and Madneſs of ſo deſperate a Wiſh, either in reſpect of the Publick, or of Himſelf.

To wiſh againſt the Being of a God is to wiſh Mankind the greateſt Miſchief and Diſtreſs that can poſſibly be conceiv'd. It is to wiſh away the grand Support and Security of human Society, and to overturn the Foundations of all Truſt, Faith, and Confidence between Man and Man. Was there no Awe of a Supreme

preme Being, no Terrors of a Future Judgment to reſtrain us, what Government upon Earth would be able to maintain itſelf, or find Protection for its Subjects? Injuries and Outrages, Fraud and Falſehood, would prevail and ſpread far and wide, and the Iniquities of Mankind know no Bounds.——What wiſe Man would chuſe, or even dare to live in a Community of Atheiſts, if ſuch a one could be found? Let us for the preſent ſuppoſe ſuch a one, and that it ſubſiſted under an advantageous and well-choſen Form of Government. How looſe and precarious nevertheleſs would be the Obligations both of the Governors, and the governed? The one ruling, and the other ſubmitting, not *in the Fear of God*, but only in the Fear of each other: The one unawed by any Apprehenſions of an inviſible Power, which might call them to an Account for Male-adminiſtration; the other obeying not *for Conſcience Sake*, but from a Principle of *Wrath*, and civil Puniſhment.—But is not Virtue amiable, and worthy, and even beneficial in its own Nature? And as ſuch, might it not influence, and incline, and oblige the very Atheiſts themſelves? Let theſe Points be, in ſome Meaſure, acknowledged; what follows? The probable Welfare of ſuch a Community, or the Safety and Prevalence of their Government? By no means; as will be ſhewn very ſpeedily. But let us firſt go on to obſerve, that, on the preſent Suppoſition, that great Bond of Fidelity, that principal Guard

Guard and Support of Life and Property, an Oath, could have no Place at all. That ſolemn Appeal to Heaven, for the Confirmation of Evidence, the Deciſion of Controverſy, and the Prevention of Strife, would be thus a quite groundleſs and impoſſible Thing. And how wretched, how deplorable would be the Condition of Mankind, was there no God for guilty Men to fear, or honeſt Men to invoke! No almighty and all-righteous Governor to protect Innocence, encourage Virtue, and controul the Inſolence of licentious Men.—— There would indeed be left the Sword of the Civil Magiſtrate; and very great Occaſion there would be for it: but yet it would be, in a great meaſure, uſeleſs for want of Direction. For how ſhould Evil-doers in this Caſe be convicted? No Evidence could be ſworn, excepting in the Magiſtrate's Name; who might perhaps be deified for that Purpoſe. But unleſs he could alſo be veſted with a Power of ſearching Mens Hearts, ſuch an Expedient muſt be altogether fruitleſs. In order therefore to convict Criminals, would it be proper and ſafe to examine Evidence unſworn, and lay the whole Streſs of every Cauſe on Mens bare Words? Suppoſing the World without a ſupreme Governor, this Rule might unavoidably take Place; but every one muſt ſee how fatal the Conſequence would prove to all Societies. For, on that Suppoſition, how ſmall a Number of Mankind would deſerve

to

to be truſted? The Credit even of the faireſt Characters would be very precarious; and as to the Generality, they would follow their ſeveral Humours and Intereſts without Remorſe or Controul.——Again; the Reſtraints of the Civil Magiſtrate would be inſufficient on another Account. For without Queſtion there are many dark Frauds, and ſecret Villanies that cannot fall under his Cognizance. In all ſuch Caſes Men muſt either be reſtrained by the Authority of their own Conſciences, or not at all. And what Authority, what Power could Conſcience have, were all Apprehenſions of a Deity removed and ſet aſide? Conſidered as Gods Vicegerent, it is indeed, and well may be, a powerful Principle: But according to the Fool's impious Wiſh recorded in my Text, the Force of it would be diminiſhed and dwindled almoſt to nothing.—However lovely, and beautiful, and beneficial, Virtue may be in itſelf; and however odious, deformed, and deſtructive, Vice is in its own Nature; yet conſidering the known Corruptions and Depravations of Mankind, theſe Conſiderations would by no means ſuffice to keep them in Order, and ſecure the Peace of the World, without a ſovereign Legiſlator, and the prevailing Sanctions of Reward and Puniſhment. To be directed merely by the Rules of right Reaſon, and influenced by the Charms of Virtue alone, requires greater Integrity of Mind, a more excellent Diſpoſition, and perhaps a more elegant

and

and refined Taſte, than can ever be expected from the Bulk of Mankind. They are all capable of being moved by Hopes and Fears; by the Apprehenſions of final Happineſs and Miſery; but the Attractions of moral Beauty, and virtuous Excellence, can have very little Effect on any but Men of Honour and Probity, and indeed a ſuperior Turn of Mind. And even in reſpect of theſe, mere unſupported Virtue muſt be very weak and uncertain, in Compariſon of that which is accompanied with Religion, and connected with it. We plainly ſee, degenerate as the World is, that innumerable Diſorders are prevented by the Authority of Parents, Maſters, and Magiſtrates; without which all Societies would ſoon be ſubverted, and human Life become a mere Scene of Riot, Rapine, and Confuſion. And if ſuch ſmall Clans and Communities of Men ſtand in ſuch need of *Superiors* and Governors, does not the Care and Conduct of the Whole require a *Supreme?* Human Authority, however it may reſtrain outward Actions, yet cannot take hold of Mens Conſciences. This can only be done by the great Searcher of Hearts. And yet without it all the Governments upon Earth would be very ſuperficial, and of ſmall Force. We find in Fact, how frequently and familiarly Men break aſunder the very Bonds of Religion, ſtrong as they are: How much greater Lengths then would they run without Religion? Who can imagine that the Generality

of

of Mankind could be held in any tolerable Order by the Beauty of Virtue, or the Tyes of Honour? These might, in some measure, prevail with a few select Spirits; at least while nothing appeared in Opposition to them: but in the Day of fierce Tryal, and strong Temptation, it is not to be supposed that any Man's Integrity should be able to bear up without the Supports of Religion.—— In short, without the Belief of a Deity, Society could not subsist; or if it did, it would be worse than any Solitude. As no Government upon Earth could answer the Purpose of its Institution, so the principal Blessings and Comforts of Life would be utterly destroy'd. No Man could safely rely either on his Fellow-Creatures, or himself; but mutual Jealousies and universal Suspicions would produce endless Divisions, Contentions, and Animosities, to the total Subversion of every Thing good and desirable in Life.

But further, abstracting from Society and Government, we may go on to consider how the Minds and Conditions of private Persons would be affected by the Supposition of a forlorn and fatherless World. Under the Tuition and Government of infinite Wisdom, and Goodness, every thing appears with a comfortable Aspect. Men never need to want the purest Comforts, and most perfect Satisfactions, while *God is their Portion*. *From Him cometh* not only *every good and perfect Gift* which we possess at present; but those pleasing

Hopes,

Hopes, and joyful Proſpects, which ſweeten the Cares and Toils of Life, and lye at the Bottom of all our Enjoyments. On this Account, whether the World frown or ſmile, the wiſe Man is neither highly tranſported, nor deeply dejected. Whatever be his Lot, the Peace of his Mind is ſecured, and his Heart at reſt. For his Hopes are founded on a Rock, and his Treaſure fixed where nothing can touch it.——But, on the other hand, the atheiſtic Scheme reverſes every thing; blackens the whole Face of Nature, and involves human Life in Darkneſs and Deſpair. Its better Things would yield no Contentment, and its worſe admit of no Conſolation: Or, in other Words, Adverſity would be inſupportable, and Proſperity joyleſs. Proſperity did I call it? The Word is improper, and the Thing impoſſible, on this mad Suppoſition. Without a God, a Providence, and a Future State, there could be no ſuch thing as Proſperity, no Satisfaction, no real Enjoyment for rational Beings; nor even any true Peace and Tranquility of Mind. No Affluence, no Variety of worldly Goods would be capable of yielding any Content to a thinking Man. He might entertain himſelf as he could with ſecular Amuſements; or ſtupify himſelf with ſenſual Pleaſures; but what might become of his nobler and better Part? What Proviſion would there be for the *Man*? Should he engage himſelf in the Contemplation of Truth? To what Purpoſe, if he had nothing

thing to expect beyond this Life. That one Truth, if it was a Truth, would ſpoil all the reſt, and turn them into mere Dreams and Shadows. Should he then *apply his Heart to know Wiſdom*, and practiſe Virtue? With what View? Should he endeavour to improve himſelf, to purify his Mind, and perfect his Nature, merely to prepare for the Grave, and fit himſelf for a State of Oblivion? Would any Man freight a Ship richly, in order to provide for a certain Shipwreck at the End of his Voyage? If it be alledged, that to aim at Virtue in ſuch Circumſtances would not be entirely loſt Labour, on account of its intrinſic Worth and Uſefulneſs; it is readily granted. But alas! How faintly muſt it operate under ſuch deſperate Difficulties and Diſcouragements? And indeed, excluding the Comforts of Religion, and the Hopes of Futurity, no ſort of Good could be rightly reliſhed. Virtue itſelf would only be conſidered and choſen as an Opiate, to ſooth Men's Minds, and ſoften their Afflictions. And whatever Means were uſed, Man's Life would perpetually be overcaſt, and his Days paſs on in one continued Gloom. The more he poſſeſſed of worldly Goods, and the higher he roſe in his Condition and Circumſtances, the more obnoxious he would be to the Fears of Death, and the Horrors of utter Extinction. Whatever Advantages and Succeſſes he met with, would only be the Mockeries of Fortune: Like Prizes befalling a Man who lies under the Sentence of a ſpeedy Execution.

And

And ſince Atheiſm corrupts and poiſons Proſperity what diſmal Effects would it produce in Adverſity! Would it not immediately turn Diſtreſs into Deſpair, and Miſery into Madneſs? An unhappy Mortal deep ſunk in Troubles and Misfortunes, and ſtruggling with innumerable Hardſhips here upon Earth, and yet deſtitute at the ſame time of a Protector and a Patron in Heaven, is a Condition not to be even imagined without Horror. Let a Man be ſurrounded with Croſſes and Calamities; let him be attacked at once by Want, Pain, Sickneſs, Sorrow, and all the Varieties of Wretchedneſs; while he is convinced that God governs the World with perfect Wiſdom and Goodneſs, he never needs to want ſolid Conſolation. Whatever he may endure for the preſent, he has, or may have, that Fund of Hope in his Mind, that Relief in his Eye, which are abundantly capable of ſupporting him. But ſuppoſing him void of this Hope, and that Relief; what would he then be, and wnich Way would he turn himſelf? If any one preached to him the Fool's Doctrine in my Text, would he be able to draw any Comfort out of it? If we ſuppoſe him prevail'd on to drink of the Cup of Atheiſm; how would it go down, or ſit upon his Stomach? Would it prove a powerful Cordial, and enable him to bear up under the Load that lay upon him? Alas! inſtead of alleviating his Sorrows, it would be an infinite Addition to

them: Inſtead of yielding him Patience and Comfort in his Diſtreſs, it would be apt to confound all the Powers of his Soul, and drive him to Diſtraction. Doubtleſs every Man in Miſery, if his Sufferings have not deprived him of his Senſes, muſt think of Atheiſm with the utmoſt Regret, Deteſtation, and Abhorrence; as it robs him of his only Refuge, and leaves him deſtitute of all poſſible Comfort. He will be ſo far from *ſaying in his Heart*, or endeavouring to perſuade himſelf *there is no God*; that he will naturally cry out with the Pſalmiſt, *Whom have I in Heaven but Thee? Thou, Lord, art my Rock, and my Fortreſs; my ſtrong Habitation, whereunto I may continually reſort. When* his *Soul fainteth within* him, he *will truſt in the Name of the Lord*, and *ſtay upon* his *God*.

Upon the whole, the Thought or Wiſh expreſſed in my Text, is certainly the blackeſt, moſt impious, and moſt execrable, that ever entered into the Heart of Man. It may be looked upon as the Sum and Subſtance of all poſſible Curſes; as comprehending univerſal Ruin. A Man had better, infinitely better, wiſh the Sun out of the Firmament, and all the Lights of Heaven extinguiſhed for ever. For theſe are all inconſiderable in compariſon of the great Fountain of Light and Glory; who framed and fixed them in the Heavens for the Uſe of his Creatures, and who is ever able to enlighten us with them, or without them.

But

But perhaps it may be urged in Excuſe or Extenuation of this mad Wiſh, this monſtrous Inclination, that the fooliſh or wicked Man ſpoken of in my Text, takes it up, as it were, in his own Defence. Conſcious of his Sin and Guilt, he cannot but know that his vicious Conduct muſt highly have offended the righteous Governor of the World, if ſuch a Governor there be; the Conſequence of which is greatly to be dreaded. And though *Sentence againſt him be not executed ſpeedily*, yet he knows that ſuch a Delay is no Argument of Impunity. Hence he is led to wiſh in ſecret againſt God's Exiſtence, and to perſuade himſelf, as far as poſſibly he can, that it may only prove an imaginary Terror. And though the Proofs of the contrary are more numerous than the Sands on the Sea-ſhore, and clearer than the Sun at Noon-day; yet he ſhuts his Eyes, and darkens his Underſtanding, as well as he can; and thus perhaps deludes himſelf into ſome Degree of Atheiſm.

Suppoſing then this to be a juſt State of the Caſe, we may readily perceive the deſperate Folly and Stupidity of ſuch a Proceeding; and that upon theſe two Accounts: In the *firſt* place, can the Natures of Things be any way altered by this Man's Wiſhes and Self-Deluſions? If they cannot, which he certainly knows or may know on the leaſt Reflection, what can he propoſe to gain by them? Should he be able to ſilence or evade, in ſome meaſure, the

Cries and Clamours of his Conſcience; yet the grand Iſſue and Event of his Wickedneſs will be no way mended or mitigated thereby: On the contrary, it will be rendered much worſe. But, *Secondly*, as he truſts to a fruitleſs and unprofitable Expedient, ſo he fatally neglects the only ſecure and effectual Way of retrieving his Condition. Inſtead of wiſhing and ſtruggling againſt God's Exiſtence, why does he not endeavour, what in him lies, to propitiate and pacify him? Is it not, in all reſpects, his beſt and wiſeſt Courſe heartily to repent and reform? Suppoſe a Man engaged in a Rebellion againſt his Prince, and accordingly apprehended and convicted; what Means would he uſe to extricate himſelf? Would he take great Pains to ſuppoſe, and believe, that there was really no ſuch Man? Or would he call in queſtion his Title to the Crown? Why neither. Men very ſeldom act ſo ſtupidly in their ſecular Affairs. He would inſtantly make Submiſſion; acknowledge his Crime, and promiſe inviolable Allegiance for the future. And why not the ſame Method followed by Rebels againſt Heaven? Is not the King of Kings as placable and merciful as any earthly Prince? Nay, is he not infinitely more ſo? With him, ſincere Repentance and Amendment is ſecure of a Pardon; though it often unavoidably fails and falls ſhort with the other.— What Folly therefore, what Madneſs is it in the Sinner, however guilty, to amuſe himſelf with idle

Ima-

Imaginations, and ſenſeleſs Projects, inſtead of embracing the only ſafe and ſure Means of Relief? To *ſay in his Heart there is no God*, is to give the Lye to his own Conſcience, and to contradict the whole Works of Nature from Top to Bottom. And to wiſh there was *no God*, is the Wiſh of a Traytor, or a Madman; as including his own Ruin, and the Deſtruction of the whole World.——What he ſhould have ſaid, and what every wicked Man ought to ſay, is plainly this; there certainly is a God; I perceive it, and am aſſured of it, beyond all Poſſibility of Diſpute. But this God is *good and gracious*; *plenteous in Mercy, full of Compaſſion*; *not willing that any ſhould periſh, but that the wicked ſhould turn from his way, and live*. I will therefore addreſs myſelf, with deep Humility and Contrition, to this merciful Judge; and endeavour by a new Courſe of Life to render myſelf an Object of his Favour and Forgiveneſs.

Having thus briefly repreſented the heinous Wickedneſs, and horrid Extravagance of the Suggeſtion, or Wiſh, ſet forth in my Text; I ſhall only beg leave to add the following Remark, which naturally ariſes, and offers itſelf to our Thoughts, from what has been ſaid.—— If there be ſo great Folly and Impiety in cheriſhing Atheiſtic Principles, or wiſhing there was *no God*; how inexcuſably fooliſh and criminal are thoſe Men, who believe and acknowledge a God, and yet live as if there was none! Who own him in their Thoughts and Words,

and yet *deny him in* their *Works!* Can any thing be more abſurd, as well as audacious, than, when a Man is thoroughly convinced of the Being and Perfections of the Divine Majeſty, preſuming to reſiſt his Will, diſregard his Authority, and confront the Laws of Infinite Wiſdom with the blind Counſels of his own Folly? Surely this is too daring, too deſperate for Duſt and Aſhes. Shall ſuch a Worm, ſuch an Inſect as Man, contend with Omnipotence, and act wilfully in Oppoſition and Defiance to his Maker? Alas! the Fact, however ſtrange, is notorious and common. Though it be abſolutely impoſſible Man ſhould ever *harden himſelf againſt God, and proſper*; yet the Confidence of his own fooliſh Heart bears him up, and he ruſhes thoughtleſs into his own Perdition.—— But ſuppoſing we do not ſuffer ourſelves to ſin with ſo high a hand; yet how prone are we to neglect the Honour and Service confeſſedly due to the Divine Majeſty? Neither *glorifying Him as God*, nor walking before Him with that filial Awe, and pious Reverence, which are plainly the bounden Duty of all Men, and doubly of Chriſtians. To confeſs a Heavenly Father, a Supreme Lord of all Power and Perfection, and at the ſame time pretend it needleſs to worſhip Him; is contradicting a Man's own Perceptions, and falſifying what he feels within his own Breaſt. Will any Man be ſatisfied, who finds himſelf neglected or ſlighted by his Children and Servants?

vants? No; he ſees it to be wrong in itſelf, as well as miſchievous in its Conſequences; and accordingly never fails to condemn and reſent it. How comes it then to paſs, that we behave in this very manner towards our common Parent, and univerſal Maſter? Is God the only Parent, the only Benefactor, who may be diſreſpected and ſlighted by his ungrateful Children and Dependents? The only becoming Anſwer to theſe Queſtions is Remorſe, and Shame, and Confuſion of Face. We are manifeſtly ſelf-condemned; and there is no room even for the leaſt Shadow of an Excuſe.— What remains then but that we rectify our Thoughts and Conceptions of the Supreme Being; that we ever think and ſpeak of Him, with all poſſible Reverence; that we ſtrive to attain an uniform Obedience to his ſacred Will; that we *worſhip Him* devoutly in *Spirit and Truth, and give Him the Glory due unto his Name*; that we *enter into his Gates with Thankſgiving, and into his Courts with Praiſe*: For on all Accounts He *is worthy*, infinitely *worthy, to receive Glory, and Honour, and Adoration, now, henceforth, and for evermore.*

SERMON II.

PSAL. XCVII. Part of the firſt Verſe.

The Lord reigneth, let the Earth rejoyce.----Or, according to the other Tranſlation,

The Lord is King, the Earth may be glad thereof.

TO acknowledge a Deity, and yet ſuppoſe, as ſome of the Heathen Philoſophers pretended to do, that He is altogether unconcerned either in the Creation or Government of the World, is owning him in Words, and diſowning him in Reality. In like manner, to confeſs that God made the World, and all Things therein, and at the ſame time deny his Care and Providence over it; is, in Effect, maintaining a God without Divine Attributes. It is maintaining inconſiſtent Opinions, and ſeparating Things eſſentially united. As ſure as there is a God, ſo ſure it is that he muſt be ſupremely wiſe, and infinitely good.

But

But to create the World, and then leave it to itſelf, and all the Confuſion conſequent thereupon, is a Conduct impoſſible to be reconciled with either of thoſe Perfections. If our cleareſt Ideas are to be truſted, there would be no Wiſdom, no Goodneſs at all in ſuch a Procedure. For whatever Ends might be propoſed in the Production of ſuch a forlorn World, they could not poſſibly be anſwered. Neither the Creator's Glory, nor his Creatures Happineſs, could be in any meaſure accompliſhed without a Providence. And as to any other Intentions, we are not able to frame any Conception of them. However, they muſt needs likewiſe be ineffectual, and fruſtrate on the ſame Suppoſition.

But let us examine the Grounds of this important Doctrine ſomewhat more particularly and diſtinctly. Strictly ſpeaking, the Creation neceſſarily requires the continued Influence and perpetual Support of its Creator. The natural World could not ſubſiſt a Moment without the Almighty Hand which firſt formed it. Should God be pleaſed at any time to withdraw his Power and Protection, all Nature muſt ſink in an Inſtant. Moſt certainly every thing would immediately run to Ruin, and probably fall to nothing. Both Reaſon and Revelation aſſure us, that *by him all Things conſiſt*. That *He preſerveth and upholdeth all Things by the Word of his Power*. That *in His Hand is the Soul of every living Thing, and the Breath of all Mankind*: And that *in Him we live, move, and have*

have our Being. In this reſpect therefore, God's Providence not only ſtands on firm Foundations, and ſure Evidence, but appears abſolutely neceſſary; ſince the World could no more continue without his Aid, than it could exiſt without it at firſt. The great Machine of the Univerſe, ſo wonderfully framed and fitted as it is, yet cannot go of itſelf; as unavoidably depending on its Almighty Author, and naturally requiring his Concurrence, to keep it not only in Order, but in Being. Nor does this argue any Defect in his Workmanſhip; becauſe an independent Syſtem of Creatures is not only abſurd, but utterly impoſſible.

Nevertheleſs, it is not ſo much this, as another Branch of Divine Providence, that we are chiefly to underſtand by the Declaration in my Text. God ſuperintends indeed the whole; and governs the natural, as well as the moral World. All Creatures are ſubject to his Power and Rule, whether they be animate, or inanimate: But when his Reign, his Dominion, his *Kingdom* are ſpoken of; we are primarily, if not peculiarly, to underſtand his Government of moral Agents, and rational Subjects. As theſe are his nobleſt Productions, and ſtand at the Top of the Creation, they muſt needs be the principal Objects of his Care and Providence. To direct mere Matter, and produce out of it ſo much Order and Convenience, ſo much Beauty and Variety, ſo much Symmetry aand Proportion, requires doubtleſs great Power

and

and Wiſdom; but to preſide over the intellectual Syſtem, to rule not only the *Children of Men, and the Kingdoms of the Earth*, but all *Angels*, and *Authorities*, and *Heavenly Powers*; ſuch an Adminiſtration as this is Divine in the higheſt Senſe; and ſuch a Kingdom moſt worthy of him, whoſe Power is boundleſs, *and his Underſtanding infinite*: and who upon that Account is *the only Potentate, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.*

But to proceed; this Kingdom of God, this Government of the moral World, being in a more eſpecial manner the Doctrine of my Text, and indeed moſt expreſsly taught throughout the whole Scriptures, need not be more particularly proved from thence. Let us therefore briefly and impartially enquire how it appears to the Reaſon of our own Minds.—— The Queſtion then is, if it can be called ſo, whether God's Creatures, his intelligent Creatures, be under his Care, Protection, and Government; or whether they are wholly abandon'd to their own Management, and given up to their own Guidance. If they be left to themſelves, and the Government of the World is refuſed by the Maker of it; no other Account can poſſibly be given of the thing, but that he either wanted Power or Inclination: Either was not able to execute this great Charge, or not willing. And if both theſe Suppoſitions are evidently falſe and groundleſs, the Conſequence muſt be the Truth of the Propoſition

ſet

ſet forth in my Text.---That God neither did, nor could want Power to govern the World, is manifeſt even to Demonſtration. For not to mention that Omnipotence is an eſſential Attribute of the Divine Nature, moſt certain it is, that he who was able to create the World, muſt much more be able to direct and govern it; Creation implying and requiring the higheſt of all Power. He who could raiſe the Univerſe from nothing, and fix it originally in the moſt exact Order, cannot poſſibly fail of full Power to preſerve and regulate it. *He who planted the Ear*, as the Pſalmiſt obſerves, *ſhall he not hear; he who formed the Eye, ſhall he not ſee?* Can any thing eſcape his Perception who inhabits Eternity and Infinity? Who vitally exiſts every where, and can be abſent no where? And as nothing is unknown to him, ſo nothing is *impoſſible with him*. Nothing can *reſiſt his Will*, or make the leaſt Oppoſition to his Decrees. Omnipotence knows no Difficulties; but with the greateſt Eaſe *accompliſhes* whatever it *pleaſes*, and *ſubdueth all Things unto itſelf*. The whole Creation is full of this Truth; and every Object we meet with, proclaims the incomprehenſible Power and Majeſty of him that made it.

Since then it cannot be ſuppoſed, without the greateſt Contradiction to his Nature, that God ſhould be *unable* to govern the World; we are next to conſider whether he could be

ſuppoſed

ſuppoſed *unwilling*. And the Reſolution of this Point will readily be found. For whatever is moſt agreeable to perfect Wiſdom and Goodneſs, muſt in this Caſe be Fact. Moſt infallibly God is ever willing to determine, and do, what is wiſeſt and beſt. Can then any Man think it agreeable to perfect Wiſdom, that God ſhould be ſo regardleſs of the Works of his Hands, as immediately to lay aſide all Care and Concern about them? That he ſhould make the World, and then forſake it as ſoon as he had made it? That he ſhould furniſh and fit it up in the nobleſt manner, and repleniſh it with an endleſs Variety of Inhabitants: That he ſhould produce innumerable Orders of Beings, and Ranks of Creatures, many of them formed after his own Divine Image, and qualified for the Knowledge and Imitation of himſelf; and when he had ſo done, relinquiſh the whole, and give every thing up to Chance and Confuſion? How can ſuch a Conduct as this be aſcribed to any wiſe Agent? And much leſs to infinite Wiſdom. For as we before obſerved, whatever Ends or Intentions the Creator propoſed, they could never be accompliſhed without his Direction and Concurrence.—— But perhaps it may be urged, that the World was framed in ſuch wonderful Order and Perfection, as to ſtand in no further need of the Creator's Superintendence; and that his rational Creatures were made capable of guiding themſelves, and go-

vern-

verning thoſe beneath them; and that thereby the Order of the World might be maintain'd without the Divine Interpoſition.——— The Anſwer to which is, that every Part of this Pretence is groundleſs. It is demonſtrable that the very material World cannot be kept in Order by ſecond Cauſes, but continually ſtands in need of the Creator's Influence, as might be ſhewn at large. And much leſs could the Order and Harmony of the intellectual World be maintained without the Divine Adminiſtration. It is true, Men are endued with Reaſon, and Angels with more; but yet both Men and Angels being endued alſo with Liberty, and imperfect, might act againſt the Light of their own Minds, and fall into Diſorder; and accordingly both have actually done ſo. On which Account, were it not for God's Providence and Government, it is evident that the moral World, as well as the natural, would become a mere Chaos, and fall into inextricable Confuſion. Is it not neceſſary for the public Security, that evil Men and evil Angels be curbed and reſtrained? Is it not neceſſary that Innocence be protected, and Virtue encouraged? That Guilt be expoſed and proſecuted, and Vice and Villany checked and puniſhed? And how ſhould any thing of this kind be effectually done, if God did not ſit at the Helm, direct all Affairs, and diſpoſe of all Events, according to the Rules of Righteouſneſs and Truth?—But in order to diſcover the Weakneſs of this

Plea,

Plea, we need only take notice how it would hold in any human Eſtabliſhments. Is any thing to be done without Rulers and Governors? And ſuppoſing a Set of Laws, of the beſt Laws, already made; will they execute themſelves? 'Tis very true that Men have Reaſon to direct them, and Laws of various Kinds; but 'tis likewiſe as true, that many Men have wild Humours, fierce Deſires, and furious Paſſions, which frequently prompt them to act in Defiance both of Law and Reaſon. On which Account, and for the Enforcement and Support of both, an executive Power is, and ever will be, abſolutely neceſſary in all States and Communities. And muſt not this Obſervation hold much ſtronger in reſpect of the whole Creation? If the ſeveral Societies among Men require Rulers and Governors, and cannot ſubſiſt without them; what can we think of the Univerſe itſelf? Muſt not the Whole ſtand in greater need of Government, than any Part? Moſt certain therefore it is, that the all-wiſe Creator would never produce ſuch a great and glorious Syſtem, and then leave it in a State of Anarchy; this being utterly inconſiſtent with all the Rules of Wiſdom that we are capable of diſcovering.

Nor is it leſs repugnant to his Righteouſneſs and Goodneſs. As perfectly good, he muſt propoſe the Welfare of his Creatures; and in order thereto, he would not fail to direct and govern them. For as we have already

ſeen,

ſeen, if he had left them to themſelves, they could neither expect Happineſs, Security, nor Quiet.——Again, his Guidance and Government of the World clearly follows from the Rectitude of his Nature. It is impoſſible that he ſhould be ignorant of the Behaviour of his Creatures. He muſt ſee at all times whether they do well or ill, whether they act virtuouſly or wickedly; and, as a righteous Being, cannot fail to judge them accordingly. If God did not govern the World, no ſufficient Diſtinction could be maintained between Virtue and Vice; nay, in many Caſes it would happen the latter proſpered more than the former. Vice would often ſucceed and flouriſh, and Virtue fall into extreme Diſtreſs. Now this, I ſay, is what a righteous God cannot poſſibly ſuffer; not finally, I mean. He may ſuffer it for a Seaſon, and in Fact we find that he actually does ſo; inſomuch that his Government of the World has been ſometimes called in queſtion on this very Account. But certainly without juſt Grounds. The irregular Diſtribution of Good and Evil in this Life is indeed a clear Proof of a Future State, wherein every thing will be punctually adjuſted and ſet to rights; but it proves nothing at all againſt the Doctrine we are conſidering. As ſure as God is righteous and holy, Vice will ſuffer, and Virtue will prevail and proſper in due time. But no reaſon can be ſhewn why the preſent time muſt needs be the proper time: ſo far from it,

that

that good reaſons may be given for the contrary. However, ſince it muſt be done ſooner or later, either in this Life or the next; ſince it neceſſarily follows from the Perfections of the Divine Nature, that the righteous will be protected and encouraged, and the wicked puniſhed; and ſince moreover this can only be done by the great Searcher of Hearts; the Conſequence muſt be that the World is govern'd by him.

Should we go on to enquire how he governs it, and preſume to ſearch into the Methods and Meaſures of Divine Providence, we may eaſily bewilder ourſelves in a Speculation vaſtly too high for us. We have all the Reaſon in the World to aſſure ourſelves that God's Government is moſt perfect, in all Reſpects; but to account for the Direction and Diſpoſal of patticular Events, and to diſcover how far they come under, and coincide with general Laws, ſeem Undertakings far above our preſent Faculties.—We do not ſo much as know, with any Certainty, whether there be any juſt Ground for diſtinguiſhing, as we ordinarily do, between a General, and a Particular Providence. All particular Events, for ought we know, may be ſuperintended and diſpoſed by general Laws. I might explain and confirm this Obſervation by various Inſtances and Suppoſitions; but I ſhall only mention at preſent that which follows; a Suppoſition not only very antient, but very natural, and therefore

more eaſy to be conceived, and more apt to be entertained.— What I mean is, that the Particularities of human Life may be ſpecially provided for by a Delegation of Power and Authority to ſubordinate Agents; by whoſe inviſible Intervention Events may be directed agreeably to the Will and Wiſdom of the Supreme Governor: and that perhaps in perfect Conſiſtence with the ſtated Laws of the natural World. What Abſurdity, what Impropriety, in ſuppoſing ſuch a Proviſion as this for the Tuition and Government of Mankind? Can we think it any Derogation from the Honour and Majeſty of the Supreme Ruler, to inveſt certain Beings of exalted Powers and Perfections with the Adminiſtration of his Providential Decrees; they preſiding over the ſeveral Parts of the Univerſe, while he himſelf, who alone is capable of it, informs and directs the Whole? This ſeems perfectly conformable to that Subordination and Scale of Beings, which prevail throughout all Nature, as far as our Faculties are able to ſearch. Could we ſee further, we might probably find every Syſtem, every habitable Globe, under the Government of Vicegerents; and perhaps the various Diſtricts and Provinces of each divided amongſt the Hoſt of Heaven, and reſpectively adminiſtred according to the Appointment of unerring Wiſdom. If this be agreeable to Nature and Reaſon, as muſt, I think, be allowed; I may ſafely add, that it is by no means diſagreeable

greeable to Revelation: ſo far from it, that we find in Scripture frequent Intimations of this amazing Scheme of Providence. I ſee not therefore why it may not be ſuppoſed a general Law of God's moral Government; and that ſuch a one, as no way interferes, but perfectly conſiſts with his Laws of Nature.---But I return to what is more directly the Doctrine of my Text.

Thus then it appears from the plain Principles of Reaſon that *the Lord is King*, as we read in my Text: And the next thing to be conſidered is the Inference which there follows, *the Earth may be glad thereof.* And in truth it is one of the juſteſt and moſt natural Inferences in the World. For what is there in all the Compaſs of Nature, or even within the Reach of human Imagination, that can adminiſter to the Minds of Men ſo much true Comfort, Contentment, and Complacency, as this ſingle Fact is capable of doing? The moſt deſirable, and moſt joyful Truth, that can either be uttered, or conceived, is, that *the Lord is King*, and that *his Dominion endureth throughout all Ages.* If we have any Thought, any Reflection, muſt we not needs *be glad* to find ourſelves in the Hands, and under the Protection of that Governor, whoſe great and conſtant Aim is the Safety and Felicity of all his Subjects? Who enjoins us no other Laws than thoſe of Truth and Righteouſneſs; which at the ſame time are the Rule, the inviolable

Rule of his own Actions. A Governor, who never wants Power to do whatever he pleaſes, and who never pleaſes to do any thing but what is juſt and fit. Who is gracious, merciful, and long-ſuffering; full of Gentleneſs, Goodneſs, and Loving-kindneſs; and whoſe *tender Mercies are over all his Works.* In ſhort, a Governor, who is ſo far from dealing with his Creatures by any capricious Rules, or arbitrary Meaſures; that his will is the very *Law of Kindneſs:* All his Precepts are Favours and Bleſſings, and his very Judgments Benefactions.

If we reflect on our Condition and Circumſtances in this preſent World, we cannot but find Cauſe to rejoice, on all Accounts, that we are under the Tuition and Adminiſtration of the Supreme Being. Conſidering our Wants and Infirmities, our Frailties and Follies, and how unable we are to help ourſelves; our whole Life ought to be looked upon as a State of Minority: Even in our beſt and wiſeſt Period, to loſe the Guardianſhip of Heaven would be certain Ruin. This is our grand Support and Security; and comparatively ſpeaking, the ſole Foundation of our Hope and Truſt. We are beſet on all Sides, and threatned from all Quarters; are compaſſed about with a great Variety of Dangers and Diſtreſſes. Many Difficulties we meet with that we cannot conquer; many Obſtacles that we cannot ſurmount. Numberleſs Evils hang over our Heads,

Heads, ready to fall upon us, and cruſh us, every Inſtant. When Misfortunes are at a diſtance, very often we cannot foreſee them; and when we do foreſee them, we often know not how to prevent them. And when they arrive, and are actually upon us, we frequently are at loſs how to redreſs them, or where to find a Remedy.—We are liable to ſo many Diſaſters without, and ſo many Diſorders within; are ſo much expoſed to the Fury of the Elements, and the greater Fury of lawleſs and violent Men; find ſo many Snares and Temptations planted in our Way; have ſo many Hazards and Hardſhips to encounter; ſuch a Number of Infirmities, Corruptions, and evil Habits to ſubdue in ourſelves; and ſuch Force, Fraud, and Falſhood to withſtand in others; that were we deprived of the Protection of Divine Providence, we ſhould be left utterly deſolate, and ſink down into the Depths of Sin, and Sorrow, and Mifery, as naturally *as the Sparks fly upwards.*——But, on the other hand, if we conſider ourſelves as the Objects of God's Care and Concern; that He is our Ruler, our Defender, our Guide; and *we his People, and the Sheep of his Paſture*; the Scene changes, our Condition brightens, and every thing appears with a new Face. If we take Care not to forfeit his Favour, nothing need to diſmay us; for nothing can greatly hurt us. *Though we walked through the Valley of the Shadow of Death; though the Earth were re-*

moved, and the Mountains carried into the midſt of the Sea; yet ſhould we need to fear no Evil; for *God is our Refuge and Strength, a preſent Help*, and a ſure Support, in every *Trouble*. Are we ignorant? God is omniſcient. Are we impotent? He is almighty. Are we apt to err, and prone to Sin and Folly? He is unerring Wiſdom, and ſpotleſs Perfection. If he be on our Side, who can be againſt us? If he protect us, what can touch us? Are we ſurrounded with Dangers and Calamities, Troubles and Trials; inſomuch that our Caſe appears deſperate? He can extricate us with the greateſt Eaſe, and deliver us in a Moment. For all Nature is in his Hand, and the whole Creation at his Beck.——So far then we have juſt Cauſe to rejoice, and be glad, that *the Lord is King*.

But further; as there are many and great Evils to be avoided, ſo there is a great Variety of Good to be ſought after. Many Wants and Wiſhes we unavoidably have; many natural Deſires that require to be gratified; many craving Appetites, and clamorous Affections, that will be provided for, or continually torment us. Though we may ſubſiſt, yet we cannot be ſaid to proſper, in a temporal Senſe, without a competent Share of the Comforts and Conveniences of Life. And had we nothing to depend on but our own Endeavours; how little ſhould we be able to make of them? We are apt to aſcribe our Succeſſes to ourſelves, and our own Conduct; but doubtleſs,

in

in a great measure, very unjustly. They are chiefly owing to divine Providence, and the Succours of Heaven; which conduct us, tho' unseen, and carry us on to prosperous Events. Without these invisible Aids, we should fail, and fall short, in almost every Undertaking. No Art, no Skill, no Diligence would avail us, if Providence forsook us. It would only be *lost Labour, that we hasted to rise early, and eat the Bread of Carefulness*, if we had nothing to trust to but our own Endeavours. Nor could any of our Fellow-Creatures ensure our Success. For, comparatively speaking, *vain is the Help of Man*, and precarious are all his Purposes.——But tho' human Means be insufficient for the accomplishing of our Ends, and the satisfying of our Desires; yet what may we not expect from the Interposition of Heaven, and the Wisdom and Bounty of God's Providence? What Good may we not hope for, if we be not wanting to ourselves? Whatever Objects we set our Hearts upon; whatever Blessings we have in View; if they be fit for us, and we for them, we shall, in due time, assuredly obtain them. And is not this Consideration abundantly sufficient to satisfy any reasonable Mind? If any Enjoyment be, in its Consequences, mischievous to ourselves, we are false to our own Interest if we desire it: and if it be detrimental to the Public, we cannot innocently pretend to it. But under these Limitations, our Pursuits will not fail to

be crowned with Succeſs.—— And what a Happineſs, what an Honour is it to the Children of Men, to have, I will not ſay ſuch a Governor, but ſuch a Patron, ſuch a Benefactor, ſuch a Friend? A Friend whoſe Power is commenſurate to his Wiſdom, and his Goodneſs to both. A Friend, ſo kind and conſtant, as never to deſert thoſe who do not deſert him. Whoſe Favours are ineſtimable, and his Bounty inexhauſtible. In a word, on whom we entirely depend for all the Bleſſings of this Life, and all our Hopes in the next.—Upon the whole, to be under the Divine Rule and Government is the moſt deſirable Circumſtance in the World. To be directed by infinite Wiſdom, protected by infinite Power, and befriended by infinite Goodneſs, is the happieſt Situation, and the moſt glorious Privilege that could belong either to Men or Angels.

What remains then, but that we chearfully and thankfully ſubmit to the Authority of our Heavenly Ruler? That we pay a conſtant Regard, and a willing Obedience to his ſacred Laws; the Violation of which is not only Rebellion againſt God, but Enmity againſt ourſelves. By Diſobedience and Impenitence, we may turn the *Joy* and *Gladneſs*, ſpoken of in my Text, into Grief and Terror. For moſt undoubtedly the *Judge of all the Earth will do what is right*. He will not fail to execute Judgment on obſtinate and incorrigible Offenders. But if we obey his Laws, and keep his

his Commandments; if we ſincerely endeavour to fulfil his Will, and diſcharge our Duty; we are ſure of his Acceptance, Encouragement, and Favour. Moſt gently ſhall we be treated, moſt graciouſly indulged, and moſt abundantly rewarded. *No good Thing will he with-hold from* his faithful Subjects and Servants. *Happy* then are all they *who are in ſuch a Caſe; yea bleſſed are the People who have the Lord for their God.*

SER-

SERMON III.

PSAL. VIII. 5.

For thou haſt made him a little lower than the Angels, and haſt crowned him with Glory and Honour.

WHATEVER was the immediate Occaſion of this Pſalm, and whatever remote Views may be aſcribed to it of a Prophetic Nature; yet, in its direct and primary Conſtruction, it evidently contains a pious Contemplation and Acknowledgment of God's unſpeakable Wiſdom and Goodneſs manifeſted in the Works of the Creation, and more particularly in the Formation of Man; whom he elſewhere repreſents as *wonderfully made*, and here ſets forth as peculiarly favoured and eminently diſtinguiſhed; veſted with ſuch Powers and Privileges, and poſſeſſed of ſuch Honours and Dignities, as conſtitute him little inferior to the very Angels themſelves.

The Dignity of human Nature may be conſidered either comparatively, that is, in relation

tion to the various Tribes of Creatures beneath us, or abſolutely and in itſelf. For wherever there is found the Image of the great Creator, there, we may affirm, is real and abſolute Dignity; which therefore may juſtly be aſcribed to Man, on account of his being expreſly allowed in Scripture to be formed after God's Image, and of thoſe high Powers and Faculties wherein that Image is ſuppoſed to conſiſt. The Honour indeed which is done him in Scripture by the Attribution of his Maker's Likeneſs, has been by ſome differently explained, and underſtood; as if it conſiſted not in perſonal Powers, but in that Authority and Dominion given him over all other living Creatures on the Face of the Earth. Whatever Reſemblance may ariſe from this Dominion, it cannot, I think, be allowed that this is the principal Ground of the Honour we are ſpeaking of; foraſmuch as it ſeems only a natural Conſequence of thoſe intellectual and moral Powers with which God has bleſſed the Children of Men. Here therefore, in all Probability, we muſt trace the Divine Image, as well as ſearch for that Pre-eminence and Diſtinction wherein the Pſalmiſt triumphs in my Text. By theſe chiefly is our Nature enobled, and even our inferior Faculties raiſed, refined, and render'd more valuable.

The Perceptions of *Senſe* belong, more or leſs, to all Animals; many of which are poſſeſſed equally by Men and Brutes. Nay, in ſome

ſome Inſtances, their Senſes are ſtronger and quicker than ours; and perhaps their Inſtincts more numerous and extenſive; which, all Things conſidered, may be look'd upon as neceſſary for the Preſervation of their Beings, and the Continuance of their Species. Nevertheleſs how wide, how remarkable a Difference is there between their Perceptions and ours? Thoſe very Creatures which have the ſharpeſt and moſt piercing Sight, how poorly, how imperfectly do they perceive external Objects in compariſon of Man? In him the external Power is accompanied with an internal one; which enables him to diſcover that Order, that Proportion, that Beauty, of which no inferior Creature appears to have the leaſt Idea. Hence he becomes a fit Spectator of God's Works, and is ſo far capable of beholding and admiring the Wonders of the Creation: Hence he enjoys the Pleaſure of extended Views, and ſpacious Proſpects; and can entertain himſelf with all the Varieties of Art and Nature. He can lift up his Eyes to the Heavens, and ſurvey the Glories of the Firmament; diſcovering there, and indeed every where, abundant Matter for the Exerciſe and Employment even of his higheſt Faculties. And this Superiority of human Senſe is not peculiar to that of Sight. While other Creatures only hear Sounds in ſuch a manner as conduces to the Purpoſes of animal Life, Man is capable of diſcovering their Proportions,

ons, and thereby qualified for the Perception and Pleaſure of Harmony; which, properly ſpeaking, cannot be aſcribed to any Ear but his own. And in him this Senſe is, in a wonderful manner, ſubſervient to the Uſe and Operation of his nobleſt Powers, as will be further obſerved and conſidered afterwards.

If from the Powers and Perceptions of Senſe we go on to thoſe of *Imagination* and *Memory*, the Mind of Man appears to ſtill greater Advantage, and the Difference between him and other Animals much wider. Tho' the Images which Brutes derive from Senſe, may really make Impreſſion, and abide with them, ſo far I mean, as to recur, and preſent themſelves to their Imaginations, as often, and in ſuch a manner, as their Occaſions require, yet how inconſiderable is this in compariſon of the ſame Faculty in Man? For as thoſe Images are but few, and of the loweſt Kind, ſo the Minds of thoſe Creatures may be look'd upon as entirely paſſive in the Perception of them. Such Images in them ſeem nothing more than ſo many Calls of Nature, which they obſerve and follow, not by Choice, but Neceſſity. Whereas Man has an active as well as a paſſive Memory: He can for the moſt part recollect, at pleaſure, whatever he has ſeen; and review any of thoſe Objects that have entered in at his Senſes; and not only ſo, but he can alter and diverſify them as he pleaſes. He can enlarge, or diminiſh, divide

or

or compound them, without Meaſure, and without End. He can frame innumerable Images that he never ſaw, and as it were create to himſelf an Infinity of Conceptions that exiſt no where but in his own Mind. And how capacious and comprehenſive is human Imagination? And what an endleſs Variety of Objects is treaſured up in it? How rich in thoſe natural Ideas, with which it is daily repleniſhed; and how full and fruitful of its own Inventions!——And as we juſtly admire this Faculty for the Extent and Compaſs of it, and the Variety of its Furniture; ſo we cannot well avoid taking Notice how amazingly quick it is in its Perceptions and Operations. How ſoon, and how eaſily does the Mind bring together the remoteſt Objects, and connect the moſt diſtant Events! How ſwiftly does it run through the ſeveral Ages and Periods of the World, and carry on its Views from the Creation to the Conſummation!—The Imagination is not to be bounded, or retarded, by any Limits of Time, or Lengths of Space: On the Wings of this Faculty we can fly in an Inſtant to the uttermoſt Parts of the Earth; we can aſcend on high, climb the Heavens, and ſoar among the Stars. We can travel on, in Idea, from World to World, from Syſtem to Syſtem, till our Thoughts be quite loſt and ſwallowed up in the Immenſity of God's Works. In ſhort, our Conceptions are not limited or circumſcribed within the Bounds of

the

the univerſal Creation; but can paſs the utmoſt Confines of Matter, and wander on, without End, in the unmeaſurable Regions of empty Space.——However prone Men are to abuſe this Faculty, and proſtitute it to the Purpoſes of Sin and Folly; to debaſe it with mean Images, or pollute it with vicious ones; whoever ſeriouſly conſiders the wonderful Nature of it, will ſoon be convinced of its Value and Dignity. Every thoughtful Man muſt be aſtoniſhed, when he reflects on that Multiplicity of Objects, which are hoarded in his Mind, and impreſſed on his Imagination: to find in himſelf a Power of calling before him diſtinct Repreſentations of whatever his Eyes have beheld, and of framing infinite Forms and Species that he never ſaw, and never heard of! Innumerable Scenes, both natural and artificial, riſing in Succeſſion, and continually entertaining the Mind through every Stage and Period of Life. This is ſo familiar to us, that we are apt to take little notice of it; and therefore ſeldom know how to eſtimate ſuch a Privilege: But, however we may neglect or overlook it, it is in itſelf moſt wonderful, and clearly diſcovers to all that will attend, the unſpeakable Power and Wiſdom of our great Creator.

And yet this Faculty, ſurprizing as it is, is but inferior and ſubordinate in the Mind of Man; which poſſeſſes ſtill higher, more valuable, and more excellent Powers. Proceed

we

we then to consider the noblest and most divine Gift of *Reason*, or *Intelligence*; which exalts us into our Maker's Likeness, and enables us, in some measure, to imitate a Being of infinite Perfection. This then we are to look upon as the chief Distinction, the glorious Prerogative of a human Soul. To this supreme Faculty our Senses and our Imaginations are alike subservient; as being directed by it, and deriving from it their principal Value. Without a Power of reflecting and reasoning, no Perceptions, either of Sense or Imagination, could avail us much, or procure us any considerable Satisfaction. We might take in a great Variety of Objects; but, like Brutes, should really *understand* nothing of them.---'Tis by this Faculty that we discover Causes and Effects, find out the Ends and Uses of Things, and apprehend their Properties, Relations, Consequences; comparing Objects together, and discerning where they agree, and where they differ; observing their various Connections and Dependencies, and perceiving how one Thing infers, and follows from another. It is this Faculty which enables us to abstract our Thoughts, and turn particular Ideas into universal Ones; to cultivate Arts and Sciences, invent Languages, and maintain Correspondence over the Face of the whole Earth; to form Societies, enact Laws, and establish Government. By this Faculty we launch out into the boundless Ocean of Truth, and return laden

den with Treaſures of Knowledge: By this we commit our Thoughts to Writing, communicate them at a Diſtance, and tranſmit them to Poſterity. By this Faculty we apprehend moral Relations, diſcern Right and Wrong, Good and Evil; are capable of regulating our Thoughts, Words, and Actions, and of ennobling our Minds by the Acquiſition of Wiſdom and Virtue.---Again, hence it is that we can turn our Thoughts back upon themſelves, and clearly perceive the Powers and Operations of our own Minds; that we diſtinguiſh between Matter and Spirit, between our Souls and our Bodies, and find the one deſtin'd to Duſt, the other to Immortality. Hence it is that we conclude the Exiſtence of innumerable Orders and Degrees of ſuperior Spirits, exalted far above us in Power and Capacity, and approaching in Reſemblance nearer and nearer to the great Original. Laſtly, hence it is, that we are capable of diſcovering and demonſtrating the Exiſtence of the Deity; of learning his Will, and looking into his adorable Attributes, and ſpotleſs Perfections: That we become acquainted with the *Majeſty of his Kingdom*, and *the Greatneſs of his Excellency*; *before whom all the Inhabitants of the Earth*, all Powers and Principalities, *are reputed as nothing*: That we find abundant Cauſe to admire him in all his Works, and all his Ways, and every where behold the Marks and Footſteps of infinite Power, Wiſdom and Goodneſs.

Having thus conſidered thoſe Faculties of the Soul which may be called its perceptive Powers, we are next to take notice of its *Liberty*, or Freedom of Will. And this may be look'd upon as an Image of the Creator's Power, as our Reaſon is of his Intelligence. By this Faculty we move our Bodies, and exert the Operations of our Minds; and find, in a great meaſure, our Thoughts, Words, and Actions, at our own Diſpoſal. As we readily move our Limbs, though we cannot comprehend muſcular Motion; ſo we freely command our Ideas, though we are not able to underſtand how it is that ſuch a Power is exerted. Every Moments Experience aſſures us that we have it; though we can give very little Account of the Nature of it, or the manner of its Operation. We ſay to one Thought, *go, and it goeth; and to another, come, and it cometh.* And though ſome intrude themſelves, and others, by deep Impreſſion, or long Cuſtom, take faſt hold of the Mind, and are hard to be driven away, yet none can ſtay againſt our Wills: If we be reſolute and ſtedfaſt, we can diſmiſs thoſe Thoughts, and baniſh thoſe Ideas, which are moſt familiar or importunate, and introduce what we pleaſe in the room of them. And the ſame Freedom we have in reſpect of our Words, and Actions, which equally depend on the uncontroulable Determinations of our Minds and Wills. In ſhort, we are entruſted with the Guidance and Government of

our

ourſelves, and the Reins are put into our own Hands. And being thus conſtituted Maſters of ourſelves, and our own Conduct, and endued with ſuitable Talents and Powers, we are juſtly anſwerable for the Diſcharge of this important Truſt. Whoever does amiſs, the Fault is his own, and *Sin lieth at his Door*. A Man may indeed, in ſome Senſe, loſe this his Liberty: He may ſo far loſe it, as to become *the Servant of Sin*, and a Slave to his Luſts and Paſſions; but then this Bondage is, and muſt be, his Choice, and he is a Slave of his own making. Doubtleſs Men may abuſe or impair any of their Faculties: They may, by Miſmanagement, dull their Senſes, defile their Imaginations, corrupt their Underſtandings, or ſhackle their Wills; but this is ſo far from being an Argument againſt the Power I am ſpeaking of, that it amounts to plain Proofs, and direct Inſtances of it.

I might now proceed to take notice of various Affections, and Propenſities, planted in the Soul, and balanced againſt each other in a wonderful manner; a Diſplay of which would open a new Scene, and yield further Proofs of the Point before us: But this being too copious and complicated a Subject for our preſent Inquiry, I ſhall not now inſiſt on it. The foregoing Account, though but a ſhort and imperfect Sketch of the Powers of human Nature, may ſuffice to convince us of the peculiar Excellence and Dignity thereof; even

without the Support and Confirmation of other Arguments, which I purpoſely forbear, as not directly included in the Words of my Texts. At preſent, I only conſider Man in that Light wherein the Pſalmiſt has there placed him, as naturally endued with high Gifts, and honourable Diſtinctions, and fix'd in a Situation little lower than the very Angels.——We know not indeed, and ſhould not therefore preſume to define, what particular Powers belong to ſuperior Spirits. We can neither determine to what Heights and Dignities they are exalted, nor into what Claſſes and Gradations they are diſtributed by the great Creator. But, in general, we may ſecurely ſay, that they neither have, nor can have, any higher Dignity, or nobler Diſtinction, than to be formed, after God's own Image; and this very Honour, though in a lower Degree, the Children of Men are bleſſed with. That Divine Likeneſs which conſiſts in intellectual and moral Powers, is common to Men and Angels; though doubtleſs in very different Meaſures and Proportions: Such a Difference prevailing, without Queſtion, in various Ranks and Subordinations, among the Angels themſelves.——May it not then be allowable to magnify human Nature, and extol it, as it were, *in the Confidence of boaſting?* Such a Reſemblance, ſuch an Alliance as my Text ſpeaks of, demands our peculiar Attention; our higheſt Regards, and moſt joyful Acknow-

Acknowledgments. Though one Part of us be only Duſt and Aſhes, the other Part partakes of a heavenly Original, and claims Kindred with the Angels. Have they immaterial and incorruptible Subſtances? So have we. Have they Reaſon, Intelligence, Liberty? So have we. Are they qualified to worſhip the Creator, to admire him in his Works, and enjoy him for ever? So are we. Doubtleſs then the foregoing Doctrine is well grounded, and firmly ſupported; and our only remaining Concern is to make a proper Uſe of it.——In order thereto, I ſhall briefly point out ſuch Inferences and Concluſions, as naturally flow from it; and, if we be not wanting to ourſelves, will make us improve it to our unſpeakable Comfort and Advantage. And in the

Firſt place, from the Dignity of human Nature, and thoſe diſtinguiſhing Powers which are granted us, we may juſtly preſume, ſetting aſide all other Proofs, that this preſent Life is not the whole of our Exiſtence; but that we are deſigned to live again, and deſtined for another State. A Being ſo curiouſly framed, ſo richly adorned, ſo nobly endowed, ſo *fearfully and wonderfully made*, as the Soul of Man appears to be, cannot ſurely be confined by the Maker of it to that ſhort Span which is here allotted us. Such a Being can never be intended to paſs away like a Shadow; and, after the Term of a few Years, expire and periſh

riſh for ever. If this were our Caſe, why ſuch a Waſte of Workmanſhip? Why ſuch a Profuſion of Art and Skill? Whence is it that our Talents and Endowments are thus diſproportioned to our Conditions? To what End was the Divine Image planted in us? Can ſuch excellent Powers, and ſublime Faculties, be given us merely for the Purpoſes of this vain and tranſitory State? Can it be ſuppoſed that Man, after he has been toſs'd a little while on the Billows of a tempeſtuous World, ſhould immediately ſink into utter Oblivion? Is it to be imagined that a Race of Creatures thus furniſhed, and fitted out, ſhould only riſe and vaniſh like Bubbles in a Storm? If Death make an utter End of us; if our Souls are to *fade as Leaves*, and be cut down as *Flowers of the Field*; why were we *made little lower than the Angels, and crowned with Glory and Honour?*——Had Mankind nothing to expect beyond the Grave, their beſt Faculties would be a Torment to them; and the more conſiderate and virtuous they were, the greater Concern and Grief they would feel from the ſhortneſs of their Proſpect. When a Man had greatly improved his Mind by a pious Contemplation of his Maker, and a diligent Study of his Nature and his Works; how deeply would it afflict him, to conſider, that in a very ſhort time he might be ſtripped of thoſe glorious Ideas, and loſe both them and himſelf for ever! But every wiſe and good Man may

have

have the Satisfaction of assuring himself that this will not be his Fate: For *surely there is a Reward, and his Expectation shall not be cut off.* But

Secondly, Endued with such Powers, and blessed with such Prospects, we ought ever to maintain a deep Sense of our Maker's Bounty and Goodness, and to be continually acknowledging our Obligations with the utmost Gratitude, Sincerity, and Veneration. Nothing is more manifest than that we are bound to be thankful in proportion to the Gifts that we have received. And since the Value of these is the Rule and Measure of our Obligations, it plainly appears from the foregoing Account how immensely we are indebted! To be constituted moral Agents, and crowned with Liberty and Understanding; to bear the Signature of God's Image, and be qualified for the Joys and Glories of a blessed Immortality, are Goods really inestimable, and Privileges above all Price. As such, they deserve and demand suitable Sentiments, and the most solemn Thanksgiving. We ought to be continually extolling our supreme Benefactor, and *abundantly uttering the Memory of his great Goodness: To give him Thanks for his unspeakable Gifts; to praise him for his marvellous Works; who hath crowned us with Mercy and Loving-Kindness, and made us meet to be Partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints.*

Thirdly, Not only in our Thoughts, not only with our Lips, but in our Lives and Actions, and through the whole Courſe of our Conduct, is our Gratitude to appear. Since God has made us intelligent and free; capable of knowing and ſerving our Creator; we are bound, in all reſpects, to behave accordingly. More particularly it is incumbent on us to take ſpecial Heed that we abuſe not God's Gifts; that we do not pervert the noble Faculties which he has given us, nor proſtitute them to the Purpoſes of Sin and Folly. When God has fixed us in ſo high and happy a Situation, and fitted us for a State yet higher and happier, as well as more durable; when he has placed us near to the Angels, and prepared for us, in common with them, a glorious Immortality; what can be more ungrateful, what more unworthy, what more ſtupid, than wilfully to debaſe ourſelves, and ſink down to a Level with the Beaſts that periſh? What greater Indignity can we offer to the Author of our Beings, than to be thus regardleſs of the Honour he has done us, and the Happineſs he has offered us? To riot in his Bleſſings, and rebel againſt his Goodneſs? To deface, as far as in us lies, his ſacred Image, and drown our rational Powers in Intemperance and Senſuality? We cannot be ignorant that they were given us, not to adminiſter to our Luſts and Appetites, but to direct and govern them: And if we ſuf-

fer

fer theſe to break looſe, and give Law to our Reaſon; we are ſo far from maintaining the Dignity of our Nature, that we fall into a State lower and more abject than Brutality itſelf. Thoſe Creatures which have not Underſtanding, muſt unavoidably be acted by inferior Principles: But for moral Agents to forſake the Light of Reaſon, and follow the Impulſe of blind Paſſions, is the higheſt Affront to their Maker, and the greateſt Injury that can be done to themſelves. Such a Proceeding as this quite confounds the Order of Nature, and turns the human Frame upſide down; tranſforms a Man into a Monſter, and buries all his Honours in the Duſt.

Fourthly, and laſtly, It is not ſufficient that we guard againſt the Abuſe of our natural Powers; we are obliged, both in Point of Duty and Intereſt, to cultivate and improve them. Whatever Talents God commits to our Truſt, whether internal or external, he expects and demands an Account. The higher human Nature is exalted, and the nearer it approaches to that of Angels, the greater Obligations Men lie under to exert accordingly. For it is the Rule both of Reaſon and Revelation, that *to whomſoever much is given, of them ſhall be much required.* Since God has favoured us with ſuch valuable Powers, and precious Capacities; improveable in themſelves, and deſigned for Improvement; they cannot

cannot be neglected by us without great Diſhonour to the Donor, as well as great Detriment to ourſelves. And indeed our Welfare, both here and hereafter, very much depends on the Care we take, and the Endeavour we uſe in this important Affair: And that from the Natures of Things, as well as by Divine Appointment. For Happineſs is the natural Reſult of a due Uſe and Exerciſe of our Faculties. Hence flow the ineſtimable Advantages of Wiſdom and Virtue; which outweigh, infinitely outweigh, all outward Goods, however various and abundant. Even this *Life conſiſteth not in* ſuch *Poſſeſſions*, nor in the *Abundance* thereof; the principal Comforts and Enjoyments of which are of quite another Nature. And as to Futurity, no other Preparation, no other Proviſion, can avail any thing, or turn to any Account. The Joys of Heaven, whatever they may be, can reſt on no other Foundation; foraſmuch as without Virtue no Man can poſſibly be qualified for them. The Improvement of our Talents is therefore, we ſee, a Matter of great and eternal Conſequence. Our well-being for ever depends thereupon; and every Degree of Bliſs is commenſurate to that of our Improvement.——What remains then, but that we imprint theſe Truths in our Minds, and be influenced by them? That, entertaining a juſt Senſe of our Privileges, we ſtrive to convert them to our own true Good, and our Maker's Glory. In vain ſhall we boaſt

of

of the Dignity of our Nature, if there be none in our Conduct. Without a ſuitable Behaviour, the Height of our Pretenſions will only aggravate our Guilt, and increaſe our Condemnation. By debaſing ourſelves here, we ſhall forfeit every thing hereafter, and degrade ourſelves for ever. On the other hand, if in this Life we be mindful of the Dignity of our Nature, and act agreeably thereto; if prompted by a laudable Ambition, we labour to improve it, and preſs on towards Perfection; we ſhall be exalted, in the next, above all our Hopes and Conceptions: Bliſs, Glory, and Honour, ſhall be our Reward and our Portion; and, in the Language of the Prophet, we ſhall *ſhine like Stars for ever and ever.*

SERMON IV.

ECCLES. XII. Part of the ſeventh Verſe.

And the Spirit ſhall return unto God who gave it.

THIS Chapter begins with an Exhortation to Youth, to ſeaſon their Minds with an early Senſe of God and their Duty; that it may direct them in all their Ways, and be a Support and Comfort to them in the Declenſion of Life. The wiſe Preacher ſhews the Folly of deferring the Thoughts of Religion, and the Improvement of Men's Minds to their latter Days. He is ſo far from looking upon old Age as a proper Seaſon for the Accompliſhment of this great Work, that he repreſents it as ſcarce able to bear its own Weight: And then deſcribes, in a noble Allegory, its various Infirmities and gradual Decays, till it terminate in Death and Diſſolution. Next he purſues the Soul

753

Soul and Body after their Separation, points out the Fate and Lot of both, and traces them to their reſpective Originals. *The Duſt*, ſays he, *ſhall return to the Earth as it was, and the Spirit ſhall return unto God who gave it.* That is, the Body ſhall diſſolve into that Earth of which it was firſt compoſed, and be incorporated with it; but the Soul being of a higher and nobler Nature, will ſurvive the Separation, and return into the Hands of its Creator; to give an Account of itſelf, and be by him treated and dealt with according to the Condition and Circumſtances in which he ſhall find it.——My Text is therefore a plain and poſitive Declaration of a Future State; and, by probable Conſequence, of the Perpetuity of that State; which are therefore to be the Subjects of the following Diſcourſe.—— And what can be more worthy of our Inquiry and Concern? Of all Queſtions that can poſſibly come under our Conſideration, the moſt important is, Whether there be not another Life after this: Whether we are to die like brute Beaſts that have no Underſtanding, or to live again in a Future State, and exiſt for ever. Theſe are Points of ſuch vaſt Moment, ſuch infinite Conſequence, that they neceſſarily demand every Man's moſt ſerious Attention. In other Purſuits we may be engaged by a Principle of Curioſity, or the Love of Truth; or perhaps ſome particular Intereſt: But on the Reſolution of theſe Points depends our All;

for

for ſo indeed it is upon the Compariſon. If Death make an utter End of us, and we have no Proſpect beyond it; this Life may be looked upon as a mere Shadow, or a Dream not worth regarding.---- But perhaps it will be aſked, what Occaſion there is to examine a Queſtion that we find already determined to our hands. For does not Revelation aſſure us of a Future State? And are not *Life and Immortality* fully *brought to Light in the Goſpel?* This is very true; but ſtill the Proofs and Evidences of natural Reaſon deſerve to be conſidered; partly to arm our Minds againſt the Objections of Unbelievers, and enable us to promote their Conviction; and partly for the Support and Confirmation of our own Faith. And indeed it cannot but give Satisfaction to every rational Chriſtian, to find that the Doctrines of that Revelation which he has embraced, are perfectly agreeable to the Natures of Things, and the Reaſon of his own Mind.-- Let us then briefly conſider the great Doctrine of a Future State in this Light, and ſee what Indications, what Evidence, we can diſcover by it. In order thereto it will be requiſite to conſider——The Nature of a human Soul.—The preſent Condition and Circumſtances of Mankind.---And the moral Perfections of our Maker.—I begin with enquiring into the Nature and Frame of a human Soul; concerning which let it be obſerved in the

Firſt

First place, that it plainly appears to be a ſimple, uncompounded, indiviſible Subſtance. All Matter is evidently Compoſition; every Part or Parcel of it being an endleſs Combination or Heap of Subſtances; and, by Conſequence, neceſſarily liable to Diſſolution and Corruption. For the Particles whereof it conſiſts are always unavoidably ſubject to Diſunion and Separation; and accordingly hence it comes to paſs, that every Syſtem of Matter is broken up in time, and ſooner or later moulders away. But that the Soul is not thus compounded, is manifeſt from all its Perceptions, and all its Operations; as might be ſhewn at large, were not ſuch Arguments too abſtracted for the preſent Occaſion. The Soul then being an uncompounded, ſingle Subſtance; can admit of no Diviſion or Diſſolution; and from hence it clearly follows, that it is and muſt be incorruptible. But how incorruptible? May not God annihilate it whenever he pleaſes? Doubtleſs he may; and the ſame may be ſaid of the whole Creation. Whether it be probable that he will do ſo, is to be enquired and conſidered afterwards. In the mean time, we may ſafely conclude from the foregoing Conſideration, that the Soul is not capable of being deſtroyed by ſecond Cauſes; which is all that the preſent Argument pretends to prove. But

Secondly,

Secondly, Another Argument drawn from the Nature of the Soul is the Excellence of thoſe Powers and Faculties which God has given it. But having particularly conſidered this Point in the foregoing Diſcourſe, it will be needleſs to reſume it here, nor ſhall I repeat. It may be ſufficient to point out in a few Words where the Force of the Argument lies. Since God has endued us with intellectual and moral Capacities; thoſe great and ſublime Powers, which dignify our Nature, and render us Partakers of the Divine Image; it can never be ſuppoſed, with the leaſt Colour of Probability, that he ſhould confine us to the ſhort Span of this preſent Life; and intend us, in a few Years, to periſh for ever. Since the Soul of Man is ſo highly exalted, and ſo nobly framed and furniſhed, it muſt, in all likelihood, be deſigned for a very different Duration, as well as a more perfect State.——Eſpecially if we conſider

Thirdly, That we neither do nor can arrive in this Life at that Perfection, and Maturity, of which our Natures are manifeſtly capable. All the Creatures beneath us ſeem to attain their full Perfection in their preſent State; I mean, to riſe to the Height of their reſpective Capacities. But this appears far from being the Caſe of human Souls. Even thoſe Men that have the largeſt Abilities, and faireſt Oppor-

portunities, and make the beſt Uſe of them, neither do nor can accompliſh their Minds to the Extent of their Faculties. They can neither obtain that Meaſure of Knowledge, nor thoſe Degrees of Virtue, nor that Portion of Happineſs whereof they are capable.——Part of human Life is ſpent before the firſt Dawnings of Reaſon; and a great Part of it paſſed before we reach any Ripeneſs of Underſtanding. To which may be added the Diſadvantages and Decays that commonly attend Men in the laſt Stage of Life. And how ſhort, how ſcanty is the intermediate Term for the Culture of our Minds, and the Improvement of our Faculties? Yet ſhort as it is, a great Part of it is unavoidably taken up in providing for the Occaſions of our Bodies, and anſwering the Demands of Senſe. Are we then ſo framed, as barely to be allowed juſt to taſte the Sweets of Knowledge, and the Satisfactions of Truth? Are theſe deſirable Objects ſet before our Eyes to engage our Affections, and excite our Longings; and as ſoon almoſt as we underſtand the Worth of them, to be ſnatched away from us for ever? Was the Soul formed with ſuch large Capacities, for ſuch ſmall Improvements, and ſo inconſiderable a Duration? Was it fitted for a perpetual Progreſs, and an endleſs Growth; and yet deſigned to be cut off, as it were, in its Infancy, and periſh almoſt at its firſt ſetting out? For, in truth, the Underſtandings of Men in

this Life, appear only to be in their infant State; as being doubtleſs capable of exceeding their preſent Attainments, as much as the Knowledge of grown Men exceeds that of Children.———Again, the Meaſure of Man's Virtues and moral Graces is no leſs imperfect and defective: Suppoſing him as careful and diligent about them as he ought to be; yet even on this Suppoſition he could be no very great Proficient. Conſidering the Patterns that Men have to copy after, and the Perfections they have to imitate, a whole Eternity may ſeem requiſite for accompliſhing their Minds, and compleating their Improvements: Or, to ſpeak more properly, they can never be compleated; becauſe they will ever be capable of further Degrees, and higher Advancement. Beſides, we contract in our firſt Years ſuch an Attachment to our Senſes and Appetites, and ſuch a Fondneſs for their reſpective Objects, that the Remainder of our Lives is ſeldom ſufficient to diſengage ourſelves, and recover a right Biaſs; much leſs for arriving at a State of Perfection. In ſhort, we have ſo many Indiſpoſitions to remove, ſo many Diſorders to rectify, ſo many evil Habits to ſhake off, and ſo many good ones to introduce and eſtabliſh; that the beſt Men can only be conſidered as Beginners and Probationers in Virtue: So far are they from being able to perfect their Natures. Can it then be ſuppoſed that God ſhould have ordained us only to make an En-

Entrance into the Paths of Wiſdom and Virtue; or, at the utmoſt, a very ſhort and precarious Progreſs; and then totally diſappear, and drop into Oblivion! When we have juſt found our Feet, and learned to guide our Steps; muſt we then be ſtruck down, to riſe no more! Can theſe be the Fruits of our moral Endeavours, and religious Improvements? No Man can poſſibly believe it, till he have quite forgotten who it is that governs the World; as will further appear afterwards.——And ſince Man's Virtue is thus imperfect in this Life, his Happineſs muſt needs be ſo too. For as to outward Goods, they are little more than Shadows of true Bliſs. The Enjoyments of this World are empty, and unſatisfactory, as well as uncertain; and the whole Train of our Purſuits is, in reality, a Succeſſion of Diſappointments. Such Objects are not big enough to anſwer our Faculties. *The Eye is not ſatisfied with ſeeing, nor the Ear filled with hearing*; and much leſs is the Mind in Poſſeſſion of its Wiſhes. Since then we cannot find true and ſolid Satisfaction in this State; ſince we *walk in a vain ſhew, and diſquiet ourſelves in vain*; we may hence derive juſt Hopes of better Succeſs in another. If God created us in order to partake of the Overflowings of his Felicity; that End neither is, nor ever can be effectually anſwered here; where little more is allowed us than a bare Glimpſe of Happineſs, and that at a Diſtance. And who can imagine, after we

have acted, or endeavoured to act, a ſhort Part in the Theatre of the World; that the great Buſineſs of Life ſhould then be finiſhed, and the Scene ſhut up for ever!

Fourthly, Another Indication appearing in the Nature and Frame of our Minds, is that earneſt Deſire of Immortality, which ſo uniformly and univerſally prevails. A future State, and that a perpetual one, is the Object of every Man's Wiſh; *his* only excepted, who is ſo obſtinately and deſperately guilty, as to dread the Vengeance of Heaven; and upon that Account, and that only, wiſhes himſelf out of Being. And even in this Caſe, the Deſire of Exiſtence is far from being extinguiſhed. It ſtill operates, however over-ruled by the Terrors of his Proſpect.———But to proceed, I am not ſuppoſing that the Deſire here ſpoken of was, like many others, actually planted in our Minds by the Author of Nature: A Suppoſition as needleſs, as it ſeems to be groundleſs. For the Love of natural Good being neceſſary and unavoidable; in order to obtain that Good, the Deſire of Exiſtence muſt conſequently be ſo too. I mean, that it muſt take place, whenever there is Happineſs in Expectation. For in this Caſe the Deſire of Exiſtence neceſſarily reſults from the Frame and Conſtitution of Nature. How then, or which way does it amount to an Argument of a Future State? Had the Creator im-

implanted this Deſire in our Minds, it might readily have been concluded that he would not fail to gratify it:. But how can ſuch a Conſequence be drawn from a Deſire confeſſedly neceſſary? I anſwer, that it is as full and forcible a Proof in this Caſe, as in the other. For to frame our Minds, and fix the Nature and Conſtitution of Things, in ſuch a manner, as muſt neceſſarily produce this Deſire; is, in Effect, the ſame thing, as if he had actually and directly formed the Deſire itſelf. And therefore it is not to be ſuppoſed, in either Caſe, that he ſhould ſubject us to inevitable Deluſion and Diſappointment. Had he intended us nothing beyond this Life, he would never have drawn us irreſiſtibly into ſuch falſe Hopes, and fallacious Deſires.———Beſides; were the Neceſſity of this Deſire to be conſidered as abſolute, and every way independent of the Divine Will, ſtill the Argument would hold good. For whatever is abſolutely neceſſary, muſt be juſt and right in itſelf; and, by Conſequence, an Object of God's Approbation. But

Fifthly, That the Soul of Man will ſurvive this preſent Life, may be further argued from the Strength of thoſe benevolent Affections which God has planted in it, Affections that knit Mankind together, and produce all the ſacred Ties of Affinity, Conſanguinity, and Friendſhip. Theſe Affections improved and

heightned, in virtnous Characters, by a continual Exchange of good Offices; by real Worth, mutual Complacency, and reciprocal Eſteem; form that Union of Minds, that ſacred Tie of Friendſhip, which adorns and dignifies our Species, and contributes ſo highly to the Honour and the Happineſs of human Life. The Root of it lies deep in our Nature, and the ſtrongeſt Principles within us concur to lead us into it. What mean then ſuch Propenſions and Diſpoſitions? And whence comes it to paſs that we are ſo many ways prompted to ſtrengthen theſe Bands, and draw them as cloſe as poſſible? If this preſent State, where our *Days* are only *as an hand-breadth*, and *our Life vaniſheth as a Vapour*, be the whole of our Exiſtence; it muſt ſeem extremely hard to account for the Principles and Proviſions we are ſpeaking of. Can Men be required, by the Impulſes of Nature, and the Precepts of Virtue, to form ſuch cloſe and cordial Confederacies; to build up the faireſt and firmeſt Friendſhips, whoſe *Foundations are in the Duſt?* When Death divides the neareſt Relations, and the deareſt Friends, what is it that renders ſuch a Separation tolerable, and adminiſters real Support and Conſolation? Is it not the Expectation of meeting again in another and a better World? But if this Life was our All, and Death our utter Deſtruction; how dreadful, how inſupportable would it be? How would it rack Men's Hearts

to

to ſee before their Eyes a total Diſſolution both of Friend and Friendſhip; and to find themſelves juſt parting, never to meet more? Had therefore our Maker deſigned us for this Life only, he would, in all probability, have given us cooler Affections, and weaker Attachments; and thereby have prevented the terrible Anxieties above-mentioned. And indeed ſuch ſtrong Ligaments can never be fit for Creatures of ſo ſhort a Duration.——Again, we find in our Minds a powerful Principle of Gratitude towards Benefactors; more eſpecially our Supreme, the Author and Giver of all Good. Him we are bound, by all the Ties of Nature, and Reaſon, and Religion, to reverence and *love with all our Hearts, and with all our Souls.* We are every way excited, by a due Contemplation of his infinite Perfections, to frame the moſt amiable Ideas of him, and to work up our Minds to the higheſt Pitch of Eſteem and Veneration: To conſider the Greatneſs of his Power, the Excellence of his Majeſty, the Depth of his Wiſdom, and the Glory of his Goodneſs; how many and various his Benefits, how diffuſive and conſtant his Bounty; till our Thoughts are filled, and our Hearts enflamed, with the Luſtre, and Beauty, and Grandeur of the Object; and all our Faculties conſpire to engage and fix us in the Admiration of it. And to what end theſe mighty Obligations, and powerful Attractions? Why muſt we exert

our Faculties, and raiſe our Affections, to the higheſt Pitch, in meditating on the ſupreme Being, and admiring and adoring his boundleſs Perfections; if, after a very imperfect Acquaintance, all our Hopes are at an End, and the holy Flame is ſoon to expire, and be extinguiſhed for ever? Could ſo great and important a Preparation be required for any Purpoſes of this ſhort State? Or would our bountiful Creator bring us into Being, fit us for a Participation of the ſovereign Good, and when we had juſt begun to taſte it, ſnatch us away, and reduce us to our original nothing? Had he intended us for this Life only, he would rather have concealed from us, as much as poſſible, this glorious Object; than ſet it before us, and draw us to it, to ſo very little Purpoſe. We may ſafely therefore conclude that ſuch natural Propenſions and Tendencies plainly point out another State, and can never end in Fruſtration and Diſappointment. Were it otherwiſe, an *Acquaintance with God* would be ſo far from yielding us *Peace* and Comfort, that it would affiict us beyond meaſure, and drive us into utter Deſpair.

Sixthly, and laſtly, Another Proof, and that a very obvious one, ariſes from the Suggeſtions of Conſcience; which is continually foreboding a Future State, and urging it powerfully on the Minds of Men. It ſpeaks ſo clearly and conſtantly in behalf thereof, and

is

is ſo plain and peremptory in its Declarations, that its Teſtimony ought not to be rejected; and indeed cannot, without great Violence done to the Frame and Conſtitution of our own Minds. The Soul of Man is not only apt to ſmart under a Senſe of Guilt, but is alſo liable to ſecret Miſgivings, and painful Apprehenſions of what is to follow. When a Man has notoriouſly violated the Laws of Heaven, or the Dictates of right Reaſon, his Conſcience not only rebukes him for it, but is frequently ſpreading before his Eyes the Terrors of Futurity, and the ſad Apprehenſions of a miſerable Doom. On the other hand, when a Man has maintained his Innocence, and held faſt his Integrity; when he has carefully diſcharged his Duty, and lived up to the Dignity of his Nature; his Conſcience not only applauds him for it, but chears his Heart with Aſſurances of a future Recompence, and pleaſing Expectations of a happy hereafter. Now if there be no real Foundation for theſe Things; if this Man's Hopes, and the other Man's Fears, are altogether groundleſs and chimerical; what Account is to be given of either? How came they to ſpread ſo wide, and be ſo deeply rooted in human Nature? —— This Argument ſeems equally concluſive, whether we mean by Conſcience merely the Operation of our intellectual Faculty, or an inſtinctive Principle ſuperadded thereto. For, upon either Sup-

Suppoſition, we are manifeſtly ſo framed, as naturally and unavoidably to fall into ſuch a Perſuaſion, and fix in it. Nay, when Sin and Wickedneſs have made it Men's Intereſt to ſhake it off, and to wiſh and ſtrive againſt it as much as poſſible; they can ſeldom or never accompliſh it. The Expectation of a Future State ſticks faſt in their Minds; haunting and terrifying them, in ſpight of all their Arts and Endeavours to the contrary. Whatever Means may be uſed, Conſcience is never to be quite ſilenced; and very often it ſpeaks ſo loudly and awfully, as to ſtartle the Sinner, and makes him tremble in the midſt of his vicious Purſuits, and criminal Enjoyments. What then can be the Meaning of theſe natural Anticipations? If there be nothing to come hereafter, how ſtrangely is Man amuſed, and how unaccountably miſled? All Appearances without him, and every Principle within him conſpire to deceive him. If the Grave was his utmoſt Limit, why ſhould he find himſelf under a Neceſſity of looking beyond it? To what End were ſuch clear Proſpects opened, and ſuch ſtrong Expectations kindled? By what ſtrange Fate is he compelled to *walk in a vain Shew, and diſquiet himſelf in vain?* But the Truth is, ſuch a Suppoſition is deſtitute of all manner of Foundation; as being directly repugnant both to the Nature of God and Man; as will further appear hereafter. Whatever Conſcience preſages, what-

whatever uncorrupted Reaſon ſuggeſts, may ſecurely be relied on, and conſidered as the Voice of him, who can never diſappoint his Creatures; or falſify thoſe Expectations which he has given them. And indeed 'tis Impiety to ſuppoſe that infinite Wiſdom cannot govern the World without the Help of Fallacy and Fiction.

This Argument drawn from natural Conſcience will appear yet ſtronger, if we conſider the Extent and Univerſality of it. It is not a Notion or an Impulſe that prevails here and there; at ſome certain Times, and ſome particular Parts of the World: The Voice of it has been heard in all Ages, and in all Nations; and its Convictions ſpread over the Face of the whole Earth. Scarce an Exception to be found even among the moſt uncivilized and barbarous People. There is indeed, and has been all along, a great Difference in Mens Ideas of a Future State, according to the Lights received among them, and the Degrees of their Improvement; but the Doctrine itſelf, in ſome Dreſs or other, has univerſally prevailed. Which plainly ſhews it to be, in the ſtricteſt Senſe of the Word, natural; as ariſing from the Frame and Conſtitution of our Minds, and the genuine Principles of Humanity. Was is not founded on Nature, and perfectly agreeable to unprejudiced Reaſon, how ſhould it ever be ſo deeply rooted in the Minds

Minds of Men? Even of the beſt and * wiſeſt Men, in a more peculiar manner; and thoſe too deſtitute of ſupernatural Light, and the Benefit of Revelation. This Conſideration may be juſtly accounted a ſtrong Preſumption in behalf of the Doctrine before us. For certainly it would be very ſtrange, if Men's Minds were ſo framed and turned, that even the wiſeſt and worthieſt of them ſhould naturally run into ſuch Sentiments concerning this Matter, as had no Foundation in Truth or Nature. What ſhould give Mankind ſuch an invincible Biaſs to Error, ſuch an univerſal Tendency to Deluſion? The more we conſider theſe Things, the more we ſhall be at a loſs to give any Account of them, but what either ſuppoſes, or muſt terminate in, the Truth and Reality of a Future State.

* It is true indeed that we find ſeveral of the wiſer Ancients rejecting the Doctrine of a Future State. But what Doctrine, and how underſtood? The popular and poetical Doctrine, dreſſed up by the fabulous Poets according to their own Imaginations. In this Senſe, and, I believe, this only, was the Doctrine oppoſed by the Wiſdom of Antiquity.

SERMON V.

ECCLES. XII. Part of the ſeventh Verſe.

And the Spirit ſhall return unto God who gave it.

IN a former Diſcourſe on theſe Words, I propoſed to conſider briefly the Proofs and Evidences of a Future State, ariſing from natural Reaſon; and began with thoſe Arguments which are plainly deducible from the Frame and Conſtitution of our own Minds. This Head being then diſpatched, what now remains to be enquired into, is the preſent Condition and Circumſtances of Mankind, conſidered relatively and in Connexion with the known Attributes and Perfections of the Deity. I ſhall give a ſhort Account of each, as far as our Subject

Subject is concerned; and having laid down the Facts, produce the Argument, and point out the Concluſion, which naturally flows from them.

As to the preſent Condition and Circumſtances of Mankind, the Fact is plainly as follows. We find from daily Experience, and general Obſervation, that there is no regular Diſtribution of Good and Evil in this Life. In many Reſpects, *all Things come alike to all, and there is one Event to the Righteous and to the Wicked.* Though Virtue naturally tends to Happineſs, and Vice is naturally productive of Miſery; yet in this World neither of theſe Effects conſtantly happens: many things concurring to hinder both the one and the other. We ſee that good Men are expoſed to various Hardſhips and Misfortunes; which, on numberleſs Occaſions, they are forced to undergo. So far they oftentimes are from being happy, as might be hoped and expected, that they are deeply diſtreſſed, and greatly miſerable; ſo far from reaping the proper Fruits of their Virtue, as to ſuffer like Evil-Doers, and be compaſſed about with a ſad Variety of Wretchedneſs. Nay, it has too often happened, that their very Virtue has been the Occaſion of their Sufferings, and the accidental Cauſe of all their Calamities. On the other hand, wicked Men often proſper and flouriſh in the midſt of their Iniquities; not only eſcaping the forementioned Hardſhips,

ſhips, but abounding in all the Pleaſures and Enjoyments of Life. Nay their very Wickedneſs is ſometimes the Occaſion of their Proſperity; and a great Part of their Lives is perhaps a continued Scene of ſucceſsful Vice and triumphant Villany. All Ages and Countries abound in Inſtances of both theſe Kinds, and the Obſervation is familiar and common among Men.——So promiſcuouſly and irregularly are good and Evil diſpenſed here below! And indeed this has been at all times ſo remarkable, that many ill-adviſed Men have raſhly taken Occaſion from hence to call in queſtion either Divine Providence, or the Divine Perfections: But on very weak Grounds, as will be ſeen afterwards.

In the mean time, however difficult it may have been to account for the Providential Diſpenſations of this Life, moſt certain it is, that God's moral Character is, and muſt be, perfectly clear and unſpotted. He neceſſarily approves Virtue, and diſapproves Vice, becauſe the one is eſſentially amiable, and the other abſolutely odious in its own Nature. Conformably hereto, he is perpetually directed by the ſacred Rule of Truth and moral Fitneſs in all his Proceedings, and in all his Dealings with his Creatures. A Being of infinite Wiſdom muſt, at all times, infallibly act according to the Reaſons of Things, and the Right of every Caſe, becauſe there is always a Motive, a powerful Motive for ſo doing,

ing, ariſing from the intrinſick Worth and Excellence of ſuch Actions; and becauſe, on the other hand, there can be no poſſible Motive to induce God, on any Occaſion, to deviate from this Divine Rule.——Frail Man indeed is very much governed by Affections and Paſſions, and thoſe alas! often irregular; but his Maker, being entirely void of all Affection, can only be influenced by Reaſon and Rectitude; from which there is nothing to withdraw him, and to which he is therefore immoveably attached. The Conſequence of which is, the perfect Righteouſneſs of his Government, and the inviolable Equity of all his Diſpenſations.——Two other Particulars relating to our Subject I ſhall only juſt mention, as being univerſally acknowledged and underſtood. The one is, that God is privy to our whole Conduct, and intimately acquainted with all our Thoughts, Words, and Actions; and the other, that the Lot and Condition of every Creature is altogether dependent on him; Good and Evil being lodged in his Hands, and his Power of diſpenſing them abſolute and uncontroulable.——Theſe Truths being premiſed, I ſhall now endeavour to ſhew how we are to argue from them, in order to a clear and ſatisfactory Proof of the great Point before us. And here we ſhall find, that, ſuppoſing our Souls to periſh with our Bodies, the whole Scene of Things here below is utterly unaccountable, and indeed directly

directly repugnant to the moral Perfection of the Deity.

If then Virtue be in itſelf really better, and more deſerving than Vice, it undeniably follows that good Men have a better Title to Favour than wicked Men: their Conduct being intrinſically more amiable and meritorious. And that Virtue is really thus preferable, is, to all intelligent Beings, as evident as the Difference between Light and Darkneſs. And if to all intelligent Beings, much more to the Supreme; whoſe *Eye* is perfectly *pure*, and his Judgment unprejudiced and infallible. Virtue therefore is ſecure of his Approbation; and by Conſequence, virtuous Men of his Favour. For Goodneſs in the Action is Deſert in the Agent; and Deſert in the Agent is a Title that can never poſſibly be rejected by an all-righteous Governor. There can be no better or ſtronger Reaſon given, why God ſhould favour one Man, and diſcountenance another; than that the one is virtuous, and the other vicious. Nay, if our Ideas may be truſted, it is the only one that can finally have any Weight with ſo perfect a Judge. Moſt certain therefore it is, that God will treat Men accordingly; judging them according to their Works, and diſtinguiſhing the Righteous from the Wicked in a moſt ſignal manner; conformably to moral Truth, and the eternal Reaſons of Things. This, I ſay, will moſt aſſuredly be done at ſome time or other. But it is not done in this Life,

as we have already obſerv'd and acknowledg'd, and therefore there will certainly be another. Since at preſent the Wicked frequently proſper, and the Righteous fall into Diſtreſs, contrary to the Deſerts of the one, and the Demerits of the other; it plainly follows that there muſt and will be a Future State, to adjuſt this Irregularity, and rectify the Diſorders occaſioned by it. Without queſtion God has wiſe Reaſons for diſpenſing Good and Evil promiſcuouſly in this World; and ſome of them we know: But without a Future State he could have none at all. Nay, ſuch a Proceeding would, in that Caſe, be directly repugnant to all the Reaſon in the World. Was there to be no Life hereafter, every Man would undoubtedly be happy or unhappy here in Proportion to his Virtues or Vices. All the Events and Diſpenſations of Providence would turn upon this Hinge, and the Bleſſings of Heaven be diſtributed by this Rule. But ſince we find it in Fact very much otherwiſe, the Doctrine before us ſeems as clear and certain, as that God *loveth Righteouſneſs, and hateth Iniquity.*

Here perhaps it may be alledged, that the beſt Men, notwithſtanding their Virtues, have tranſgreſſed more or leſs, and are therefore Sinners in the Sight of God: That upon this Account they have no Right to complain of their preſent Hardſhips and Sufferings, ſuppoſing theſe Sufferings not to exceed the Proportion of their Demerits. To this I anſwer, that

however this Allegation may ſerve to ſtop the Mouths, and ſilence the Murmurs of unhappy Men, it no way affects the Argument before us, which is drawn from the moral Perfection of the Deity, and that Rule of Righteouſneſs by which he muſt neceſſarily be ſuppoſed to proceed in all his Diſpenſations. The beſt Men, we are told, have failed and fallen ſhort of their Duty, and are therefore juſtly puniſhable at any Time. Be it ſo. But have not wicked Men failed and offended much more; and therefore deſerved much greater Puniſhment? Suppoſing then no Future State, how comes it to paſs that they are not puniſhed, conſtantly puniſhed in this World, in proportion to their Demerits? If the former be juſt and fit, do we not plainly ſee that the latter is much more ſo? To *execute Sentence ſpeedily* on good Men, becauſe they have ſometimes erred and done amiſs; and at the ſame Time quite overlook the Crimes of notorious Sinners, is impoſſible to be reconciled with any Idea of moral Truth. Whatever Reaſon be aſſigned for the immediate Puniſhment of thoſe Delinquents who are leaſt guilty, muſt needs hold much ſtronger in reſpect of thoſe who are moſt guilty. And therefore, excluding a Life to come, no wicked Man would ever have proſpered in this. And the Reaſon is becauſe a righteous and perfect Governor can never act arbitrarily, or capriciouſly; but will always follow the Rule of Equity, and the Right of the Caſe. It muſt

indeed be confeſſed, that in very many Caſes, we cannot preſume to judge of the Grounds and Reaſons of the Divine Conduct: But in the preſent Caſe they are ſo plain, and clear, and cogent, that if there be any Truth in our Faculties, and Virtue and Vice be real Things, there is no Room for Doubt, or the leaſt Suſpicion of Error. God will aſſuredly manifeſt his Righteouſneſs in the moſt publick manner, and redreſs the Confuſions of this preſent Life.

Should it be further urged, that the Sufferings of the Righteous are compenſated by that Serenity of Mind, and Self-ſatisfaction, which their Virtue affords them; and that therefore there is no Occaſion for a Future State to make them Amends; the Anſwer is as follows. It is indeed readily granted, that Virtue is always amiable, always beneficial in its own Nature; and would be greatly ſo in favourable Conditions and Circumſtances. But in the Caſe we are ſpeaking of, its principal Comforts vaniſh, and the Enjoyment of it dwindles to almoſt nothing. Suppoſing a Man both virtuous and proſperous; he could not be accounted happy, had he no Proſpect beyond the Grave. Neither outward Advantages, nor inward Improvements, could avail him much, if he ſtood ſo near the Brink of Deſtruction, and expected ſo ſoon a total Diſſolution both of Soul and Body. But this is not the Caſe before us; we are ſpeaking of a good Man very unhappy in this World, and deeply diſtreſſed; ſurrounded with

Griefs

Griefs and Calamities, and perhaps his whole Life a continued Scene of Sorrow and Tribulation. Here then the Queſtion is, whether, without a Future State, his Virtue be able to make him ample Amends for all his Sufferings; to heal the Wounds of Misfortune, and ſupport him ſinking under a Load of Adverſity. Alas! this is ſo far from being the Truth of his Caſe, that he is almoſt entirely diſqualified to receive any Enjoyment, or any Comfort from his Virtue. Extremity of Pain and Grief will admit of no Comfort but what beams from above. And if the Windows of Heaven were quite ſhut, what could a good Man, in ſuch a Condition, do more, than ſit down diſconſolate, and abandoned to Sorrow and Deſpair? But is not Virtue, in itſelf, fair, and lovely, and full of Charms? True; but he is not at Leiſure, not in a Condition, to attend to them: And if he was, the more lovely he found it, the more it would grieve him to think, that he had no Hopes of living to enjoy it; excepting the poor Remainder of a ſhort and precarious Life.— Can then a righteous God leave virtuous Men thus deſtitute; or bring them into the World for ſuch a Purpoſe as this? Impoſſible. Such a Proceeding appears quite inconſiſtent even with human Goodneſs; much more with Divine.

But further; it may deſerve to be conſidered, that Part of our Species are cut off before they are capable of either contracting Guilt, or

even knowing the Difference between Vice and Virtue. Among theſe doubtleſs there are ſome whoſe Portion of Evil exceeds their Good; whoſe little Lives are almoſt filled up with Pain, and Suffering, and Lamentation. Now if theſe Hardſhips are to be made up abundantly in another Life, there is no Difficulty at all in the Caſe. But ſuppoſing no Future State, it ſeems not only difficult, but utterly impoſſible to be accounted for; ſince, on this Suppoſition, their very Exiſtence is a Calamity, an Injury, a Curſe. It is not conceivable that the all-wiſe and all-perfect Creator ſhould produce any Beings in vain; much leſs that he ſhould produce them for ſuch an End as is worſe than none at all. I will not preſume to ſay, that the Communication of Good is the ſole End of the Creation; but one End, one chief End, we plainly perceive it muſt have been: And therefore we may be aſſured that no Creatures can be ſent into the World with a quite contrary View; neither can any be treated, without any Demerit of their own, ſo hardly and rigorouſly, as to give juſt Cauſe for doubting of ſuch a Concluſion. If then the foregoing Caſe be really Fact, as cannot I think be denied, or diſputed; it affords, of itſelf, an unanſwerable Proof of a Future State.——And if among the adult Part of Mankind, there are, or have been, any ſo innocent and good, and yet ſo unhappy and wretched, that their Sufferings have exceeded the Proportion of their Demerits; the

the ſame Conſequence will follow, and every ſuch Inſtance will yield an irreſiſtible Argument for the Truth of that Doctrine which we have been conſidering. For moſt certain it is, that God can never ordain any Man to ſuffer more than he has deſerved, without making him full Reparation either here, or hereafter.

Thus then we may ſafely and juſtly argue from the preſent Condition and Circumſtances of Mankind; which, without a Future State, are plainly repugnant to the Divine Attributes; though with a Future State, as plainly and perfectly agreeable thereto. For admitting ſuch a State, the unequal and irregular Diſtributions of this Life are eaſily ſolved, and readily accounted for. Nay, they become not only intelligible, but manifeſtly convenient, ſuitable, and fit; as directly conducing to prepare Mankind for ſuch a State, by a fuller Exerciſe and Improvement of every Virtue. For a Life to come, it may be, and is, highly fitting, that we be trained and tutored here in a State of Diſcipline and Probation. Human Virtue may require, in order to its Perfection and our Happineſs, that it be thus tried, prepared, and purified: And different Minds may require different Trials, and various Diſpenſations. On which Account we have no Reaſon to wonder, when we find good Men in great Diſtreſs; this being perhaps no more than what is neceſſary to form an exalted Character; to produce more illuſtrious Virtue, and triumphant Merit.——To

Strangers and *Pilgrims*, *ſeeking a better Country*, and travelling to their appointed Home, no Difficulties or Diſtreſſes on the Road can ſeem either unnatural, or intolerable; eſpecially when they have the Pleaſure and the Encouragement to know, that their own final Advantage will be thereby promoted. Since then our Condition and Circumſtances here below, are no other than what might be expected, ſuppoſing a Future State; this may be looked on as a further Preſumption of the Reality of ſuch a State. And thus our preſent Life will be conſider'd, what it really is, a Nurſery for the next; where we are to be properly educated, and carefully diſciplined, for a more durable and bliſsful State. But, on the other hand, if we exclude Futurity, and give up all our Hopes and Pretenſions beyond the Grave; this preſent Life becomes, in the Eyes of thinking Men, all Darkneſs, Diſcomfort, and Perplexity; a ſad Scene of deſperate Diſorder, and inextricable Confuſion. This, I have ſhewn, can never be the Caſe of Mankind, while they are under the Government of infinite Wiſdom and Goodneſs.——Upon the whole, whether we conſider the Nature and Condition of Man, or the Nature and Perfections of his Maker, we find plain Indications, and ſolid Proofs of the important Doctrine now before us.

What remains to be conſider'd is, whether or no the Future State here treated of will be of perpetual

perpetual Duration. It does not indeed neceſſarily follow, that becauſe the Soul ſurvives the Body, therefore it muſt exiſt for ever. For doubtleſs it muſt always be in the Creator's Power to put a Period to its Exiſtence; and therefore its Immortality entirely depends on his good Will and Pleaſure. And if this Will has been revealed, as God be thanked it has, it muſt needs be peculiarly fitting to have Recourſe to that Revelation; as will be obſerv'd afterwards. However, at preſent, let us go on with the Evidence of natural Reaſon; which, even as to this Point, deſerves our Attention. Since then God is pleaſed to prolong the Soul's Exiſtence after Death, and provide for it another State, as appears from a great Variety of Proofs; it follows from thence, with high Degrees of Probability, that he will always continue its Being, and ſuffer it to enjoy that Immortality which ſeems to be the Privilege of its Nature. The Force of that Argument, which we have juſt examined, concerning the Sufferings of the Innocent, and the Adverſities of the Righteous, does not indeed extend thus far; becauſe another Life of a limited Duration may undoubtedly be ſufficient to compenſate both. Nevertheleſs we have, even from Reaſon, good Grounds to hope that our next Life will be unlimited and endleſs.——I ſhall content myſelf at preſent with mentioning theſe two Things. *Firſt*, That, as far as our Ideas reach, no good Reaſon can be aſ-

ſigned,

ſigned, why God ſhould interpoſe to prevent the Immortality of the Soul; nothing of this ſort having ever been urged, or produced, with the leaſt Appearance or Colour of Probability. And *Secondly*, good Reaſons may be aſſigned for the contrary Suppoſition. The Ends of the Creation, as far as we know them, are confeſſedly the Glory of God, and the Good and Happineſs of his Creatures. Now the longer good Men are ſuffer'd to exiſt in an happy State, the more they muſt needs be bleſſed, and God be glorified: and by the Perpetuation of ſuch a State, we plainly perceive that the ſame great Ends will be promoted for ever. ——But further; theſe Reaſons againſt Annihilation will not only eternally hold good, but be continually gathering new Force and Strength. The longer virtuous Men live, in ſuch a State, the fitter they muſt be for Life; and therefore, we may preſume, the leſs will be the Danger of Extinction. Their Faculties muſt grow, their Capacities enlarge, and all their Improvements increaſe, through every Part of Duration. Great Advances muſt be ever made in Knowledge, and Virtue, and Happineſs. They muſt be continually more and more capable of contemplating, admiring, and enjoying the Author of all Good, and the Fountain of all Perfection. To imagine, after this Progreſs, and theſe Exaltations of their Nature, that God ſhould cut the Thread of their Exiſtence, and put an End to their Beings,

Beings, is to ſuppoſe him acting, as far as we can judge, quite contrary to the Reaſons of Things, and the chief Ends of the Creation. For it ſeems very evident to our Underſtandings, that much more Happineſs is producible by a Grant of Immortality, than by any Succeſſion of Spirits temporary and mortal; foraſmuch as the Happineſs of the bleſſed muſt naturally riſe in a very high Proportion to the length of their Exiſtence.——Again; by Parity of Reaſon, it might as well be concluded, that God will ſome time or other annihilate the Angels, and deſtroy the whole Hoſt of Heaven, as that he ſhould take away the Exiſtence of *juſt Men made perfect*. There will be, both for Men and Angels, an Employment adequate to the Eternity we are ſpeaking of. They may ſearch for ever into the Divine Perfections, and Divine Workmanſhip, without being able to exhauſt the Subjects, or even comprehend them. They may copy after God's moral Excellence, ſtriving to approach it nearer and nearer through all Ages; and yet ever remain at an infinite Diſtance from it. In ſhort, nothing leſs than Immortality, nothing leſs than an endleſs Duration, can ſuit that tranſcendent Object, for the Study, Adoration, and Enjoyment of which they were, both of them, originally created. —— Theſe Conſiderations, together with the Arguments before produced from the Frame and Conſtitution of our own Minds, appear

appear fully ſufficient for the Conviction of unprejudiced Men.——Yet after all, tho' the Doctrines of a Future State, and the Immortality of the Soul, are ſupported by a great Variety of clear and convincing Proofs, ariſing from the mere Light of natural *Reaſon*; yet it is well and happy for us, that thoſe Proofs are enforced and confirmed by *Revelation:* That we have Aſſurances from Heaven of our perpetual Exiſtence, and that *Life and Immortality are* fully *brought to Light in the Goſpel.* This gives a powerful Sanction to the Dictates of our Conſciences, and the Deciſions of our Underſtandings. As the Evidences of Reaſon ſtrengthen our Faith, ſo the Evidences of Faith eſtabliſh the Doctrines of Reaſon; thereby leaving us doubly without Excuſe, if we reject the Truth, or ſuffer our Minds to be drawn into a Diſbelief of this moſt important Article.

The Time will only permit me to point out very briefly what Uſe we ought to make of the foregoing Doctrine. —— Are we then deſigned for Immortality, and fitted with ſuitable Faculties for an endleſs Duration? How grateful a Senſe ought we to have of the Creator's Goodneſs and Bounty! What Tributes of Praiſe and Thankſgiving are due for ſuch mighty Bleſſings, ſuch ineſtimable Privileges! What Returns of pious Adoration, and religious Reverence, in Will, Word, and Deed! —— But more eſpecially ought we to take

Care,

Care, as the beſt and moſt acceptable Expreſſion of our Gratitude, that we make a wiſe and proper Uſe of theſe Bleſſings; that we walk worthy of the high Expectations, and the glorious Proſpect which he has ſet before us; that we demean ourſelves in ſuch manner as becomes thoſe who are *made little lower than the Angels*, and alike deſtined for Immortality; that by a diligent Application to Wiſdom and Virtue we improve our Minds as much as poſſible, and prepare them for Eternity to the utmoſt Advantage.—— On our Conduct here depends all our Succeſs hereafter. If by evil Practices, and vicious Habits, we lay the Foundations of a miſerable Futurity, our Joy will be turned into Grief and Terror, and the greateſt of all Bleſſings into the deepeſt Calamity, and the direſt Curſe. In the next Life Vice and Virtue will each produce its own natural Effects, however external Cauſes may co-operate with them. Every Vice, every evil Habit, that we carry with us into another World, will, like an evil Spirit, haunt us for ever, and perſecute us to all Eternity. No Fiends, no Furies, will be able to torment Men hereafter like Sin and Guilt; the Rage and Remorſe of which no Words can repreſent, no Thoughts conceive. On the other hand, every Grace, every Virtue, every good Habit, will enlarge our Capacities for Happineſs, and be a further Preparation for it. They will not only preſerve

the

the Soul in perpetual Health, and Eaſe; but prove inexhauſtible Sources of Joy and Gladneſs. They will likewiſe make it meet to partake of thoſe unſpeakable Felicities which God has prepared for the Righteous. And how bleſſed muſt that Immortality be, where every thing within, and every thing without, adminiſter Delight, and conſpire to augment and eſtabliſh their Happineſs. ——— Laſtly, ſince there will be another Life, and that an eternal one, it muſt be very abſurd to engage our Affections deeply in this; or to be immoderately ſollicitous about any of its vain and tranſitory Enjoyments. To ſet our Hearts on the mean and periſhing Objects of this World, is, in Effect, to forget the Privileges of our Nature, and the Joys and Glories of a bleſſed Immortality. What are Hours, or Days, or Years; nay what is Time itſelf in Compariſon of an eternal Duration! This Life can bear no Proportion to the next; and yet we ſuffer it almoſt to engroſs our Thoughts, and run away with our Affections. We regard this very ſhort Span of Life, as if it was Eternity; and we regard Eternity, as if it were nothing. Our Reaſon plainly informs us that, ſuppoſing a future State dubious and uncertain, ſtill we ought to provide for the important Chance, and become Adventurers for another World. But ſince we have all the Evidence and Aſſurance that can, in Reaſon, be expected, or even deſired; what

Words

Words are able to expreſs the Folly, or rather Frenzy of thoſe, who ſlight ſuch a Good, and *neglect ſo great Salvation!*—To conclude, if the greateſt and moſt durable Happineſs that we are capable of wiſhing, be allowed to merit our Attention and Concern; then have we juſt Cauſe to bend our Thoughts this way, and devote our beſt Endeavours to the Attainment of it. Our true Intereſt prompts us to withdraw our Affections from the fleeting Shadows of this Life; continually exhorting us to moderate our Purſuit of *Things temporal, that we finally loſe not the Things which are eternal.*

10 FE 58

709

The Duty of Benevolence and Brotherly Love, and the ill Effects of a Party Spirit.

Conſidered in a

SERMON

Preached at the

ASSIZES

HELD AT

Newcaſtle upon *Tyne*,

ON

Tueſday the 8th of *Auguſt*, 1727.

By the Honourable

Mr. Baron *CARTER*,

AND

Mr. Juſtice *PROBYN*.

Publiſhed by the Order of the Judges.

BRITISH MUSEUM

TO THE

Right Revd Father in GOD,

WILLIAM,

Lord Biſhop of *Durham.*

My LORD,

WHoever attempts, in the beſt Manner he can, to recommend Allegiance and Fidelity to the Crown, and univerſal Peace and Good-will among his Fellow Subjects; becomes entitled to your Lordſhip's Indulgence, and may even promiſe himſelf ſome Degree of your Approbation.

I am ſenſible, my Lord, that the more you approve of ſuch an Undertaking, the greater Concern it will give you to find it here ſo feebly executed: But yet I have the Pleaſure of reflecting, with great Aſſurance, that your Lordſhip

Lordſhip had much rather ſee a good Meaning weakly ſupported, than an ill one dreſſed up in the moſt plauſible Colours, and carried on with the utmoſt Advantage.

That this Diſcourſe, however imperfect, may contribute to promote a Senſe of what is truly human, and truly Chriſtian; that diſengaged from the Prejudices and Reſtraints of Party, our Hearts may be open to all Mankind; that in Imitation of your Lordſhip's high Example, we may ſtedfaſtly propoſe the Maintenance and Advancement of true Religion, and the publick Welfare; that purſuing theſe great Ends by your Lordſhip's wiſe Meaſures, we may be cordially affected, and immoveably attached to our King, our Conſtitution, and our Country; is the earneſt Wiſh of,

My Lord,

Your Lordſhip's moſt obedient
and moſt humble Servant,

John Balguy.

ROMANS xii. Part of the tenth Verſe.

Be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly Love;-----

TO ſecure, in ſome Meaſure, the Obſervance of this neceſſary Duty, God has framed Mens Minds with ſuitable Propenſities, and engaged them by natural Inſtinct. They are born with kind Affections for each other, and cannot diveſt themſelves of them, without groſly corrupting their Nature, and doing great Violence to their own Minds. Every Man, who is not thus depraved, perceives and feels in himſelf this Diſpoſition; prompting him to do Good, and, upon all proper Occaſions, ſtirring him up to Acts of Kindneſs. The Sight of any Object in great Diſtreſs nearly touches him, and before he has had Time to reflect, he finds himſelf powerfully moved. His very Spirits take the Alarm, and his Heart beats quick with Charity and Compaſſion. In ſhort, he finds in himſelf a warm Inclination to relieve the unhappy Perſon, and is in Pain till he accompliſh it. In like manner, tho' it be with leſs Emotion, he

naturally ſympathizes with the Happy as well as the Miſerable; *rejoicing with them that rejoice*, as well as *weeping with them that weep*. He will take a real Pleaſure in the Proſperity of others, and be delighted with every Inſtance of good Fortune that befals them.——This, I ſay, is the natural Temper of Mens Minds, which accordingly appears, and ſhews itſelf, in all that are uncorrupted; who never fail to partake of the Joys and Miſeries of their fellow Creatures. Conſcious of this Diſpoſition we ſtile it *Humanity*, thereby not only allowing it to belong to our Nature, but appropriating it to our own Species.——It may not perhaps be needleſs to add, that the Object of theſe kind Inclinations is alſo unlimited. We are indeed too apt to reſtrain natural Affection to our Kindred, not only in the Signification of the Word, but in the Exerciſe of what it means; thereby contracting it into a very narrow Compaſs. But this is a Corruption of our Nature, as well as of our Language. For natural Affection certainly extends, tho' in a different Degree, to our whole Species, and prompts us to embrace Mankind with univerſal good Will. And this is agreeable to the Senſe of my Text, where the Apoſtle directs this *natural Affection* to be exerciſed and exerted towards *one another*; and moreover requires us to cheriſh it in this Latitude, and *take Pleaſure in it*. For ſo the * Original moſt properly ſignifies.—This being premiſed, I beg Leave to conſider briefly, what Obligations we lie under, as Men, and as Chriſtians,

* Εἰς ἀλλήλους φιλόστοργοι.

ſtians, to cultivate and improve theſe kind Affections. And

1*ſt*, I would enquire into the *Reaſonableneſs* of the Duty. That the Eſteem and Affection of our fellow Creatures is a real Good, needs no other Proof, than every Man's own Experience. If we conſider it abſtractedly from its beneficial Effects, even thus we may diſcover it to have an intrinſick Value; and that becauſe it is naturally grateful to the Mind that poſſeſſes it, which of itſelf is a ſufficient Reaſon for its being ſo generally deſired and prized. However, it becomes much more valuable by thoſe Benefits and Services that flow from it; Eſteem and Good-will are naturally accompanied with an Inclination to perform good Offices. Whenever therefore we are in Poſſeſſion of the former, we think ourſelves in ſome meaſure entitled to the latter; and for the Sake both of the one and the other, we all covet the Affections of other Men, and are deſirous of recommending ourſelves to their Favour and Friendſhip. From hence it follows by the plaineſt Rule of Reaſon and Equity, that we ought to bear good Will towards them: For how can we expect that others ſhould be well-affected to us, if we be diſaffected, or even indifferent towards others? In like manner, how can we pretend to receive Kindneſſes and Benefits, if we refuſe, on a proper Occaſion, to confer them? Suppoſing Abilities and Opportunities equal, they muſt needs have the ſame Title to our good Offices, that we have to theirs; becauſe no

Reaſon or Plea can poſſibly be alledged by us, but what may equally be alledged by them. The Obligations therefore between us, are, and muſt be reciprocal, and by Conſequence all Men are obliged to be kindly affectioned, and friendly to each other. But,

2*dly*, We may perceive even a *Neceſſity* of practiſing this Duty, in the very Condition and Circumſtances of our Being. Man is by Nature weak and indigent, and not capable alone of making any tolerable Proviſion for his own Welfare; he is liable to many Evils which he cannot redreſs; expos'd to many Wants which he is not able to ſupply, and incumber'd with many Deſires which he knows not how to gratify. In all theſe Reſpects he ſtands in need of the Protection or Aſſiſtance of his fellow Creatures, and the ſame helpleſs Condition being common to all Mankind, neceſſarily fixes the whole Species in a State of Dependance upon one another. Hence we find, that they ever had Recourſe to Society, as the common Refuge of human Infirmities; where, by a mutual Communication of Service, and Interchange of good Offices, they might obtain thoſe Comforts of Life which were not to be met with in Solitude. But how could this Point be gained, or how ſhould Society turn to any Account, without thoſe kind Affections, and that friendly Diſpoſition, which we are conſidering? If Men were generally diſinclined to one another, if, inſtead of Kindneſs and Affability, they receiv'd each other with Averſion

and

and Diſdain, if they were moroſe, and unſociable, contentious and quarrelſome, prone to give Offence, and commit Wrongs, and yet impatient of the leaſt Injury, and implacable in their Reſentments: If, I ſay, ſuch a Temper as this generally prevail'd, who ſees not that Society would be a Curſe, inſtead of a Bleſſing? Upon this Suppoſition the beſt and wiſeſt Thing that Men could do, would be to break up and diſperſe, to return into Solitude, and even hide themſelves in a Deſart.—But without theſe Extremities, it is evident that the Happineſs of any Community is diſturb'd and diminiſh'd, in Proportion to the Unkindneſs and Ill-will that ariſe in it. And even a bare Indifference, as far as it extends, defeats the End of Society, and renders it uſeleſs to Mankind. If we turn the Suppoſition the other Way, we may diſcover,

3*dly*, The great *Advantage* of a benevolent Diſpoſition. Let us then ſuppoſe a Society flouriſhing in Peace, and cemented by Love; where all the Members were inviolably attach'd to the publick Good, and harmoniouſly conſpired in the Service thereof; where unfeigned good Will, and undiſſembled Affection, univerſally prevail'd; where every Man was a ſincere Friend to every Man; in a word, where all Men vigorouſly and chearfully exerted themſelves in Acts of Kindneſs, and Labours of Love: What could be more beneficial, or more delightful, than ſuch a Temper, and ſuch a Practice? What could ſooner, or better, or more effectually, advance and eſtabliſh the publick

Happineſs, and the Welfare of every Individual? The very Idea of ſuch a Society carries a Proof along with it of the Point before us, and preſents to our View innumerable Pleaſures and Advantages, which, alas! we can only enjoy in Speculation.——And as ſuch a Diſpoſition has a happy Influence on Society (which in Fact is always proportionable to the Prevalence of it) ſo it produces ſuitable Effects in the Minds of all who are bleſs'd with it. For not to mention that Peace and Tranquility which muſt neceſſarily ariſe from the Abſence of many turbulent and tormenting Paſſions, it may be laid down as a certain Truth, that ſo much Benevolence is in Reality ſo much Happineſs; every Exerciſe of it is naturally pleaſing to him who is truly poſſeſs'd of it, and the higher it riſes, and the further it extends, the more delightful it becomes. Generous Actions are a perpetual Gratification to a generous Spirit, and the charitable Man is ever feaſting upon his own Charities: They often enjoy, in doing Good, a greater, and more exquiſite Pleaſure, than the moſt refin'd Voluptuary ever taſted.—But the good Man's Satisfaction is not confin'd within the narrow Sphere of his own Abilities. Whatever Good is done, or whatever Good is receiv'd, if it fall within the Compaſs of his Obſervation, or come to his Knowledge, he enjoys it in Reflection, and it becomes a real Addition to his own Happineſs. The very Bleſſings of Heaven that deſcend every where in ſuch Plenty and Profuſion, all adminiſter to his Comfort, and contribute

199

bute to the Increaſe of his Treaſure. Whereever they may directly fall, they are ſure to rebound upon him; foraſmuch as he continually rejoices at them, and is ever well pleas'd with his Neighbour's Succeſs. In ſhort, he thus partakes of all the Proſperity that he ſees or hears of, and is a Sharer of every Man's Joy.

4*thly*, We may proceed to conſider the *Excellence* of this benevolent Diſpoſition. And moſt certainly nothing can be more agreeable to the Dignity of our Natures, nothing can more improve or adorn our Minds, nothing can raiſe them to a higher, or nobler Pitch. What can be better, what more amiable, than kind Affections, and worthy Actions? Thoſe ſhining Characters in Hiſtory, which have been tranſmitted down from Age to Age with ſo much Applauſe, and charm'd every Reader; what Ingredients do they conſiſt of? Are they not made up of Benevolence, Kindneſs, Humanity, Generoſity, publick Spirit, and the Love of Mankind? Animated by ſuch Principles as theſe, the Benefactors of Antiquity perform'd the moſt illuſtrious Actions, ſurmounting all Difficulties, and chearfully ſacrificing Wealth, Eaſe, Liberty, and Life itſelf, to the publick Good. What Wonder, then, if ſuch Names be cover'd with Glory, and attract the Admiration of all Poſterity? And in Truth there is ſomething ſo beautiful, ſo lovely, in Beneficence and Kindneſs, that all Men of honeſt and undepraved Minds are naturally very much delighted with ſuch eminent Examples of them.—But the Excellence

of this Temper chiefly conſiſts in its Conformity to the Goodneſs and Perfection of God himſelf, who * *maketh his Sun to riſe on the Juſt and on the Unjuſt.* † *Who loads us with his Benefits, and crowns us with Mercy and loving Kindneſs.* Who ſhowers down on all his Creatures Bleſſings and Bounties in the greateſt Abundance, and is every Moment communicating Good, and diffuſing Happineſs through a whole Univerſe, and all this without a Poſſibility of any other View, than that of doing Good, and making happy.— Whatever then is the beſt Imitation, and the neareſt Reſemblance of this Goodneſs that Men are capable of, muſt needs be moſt worthy, and moſt excellent, and conduce in the higheſt Degree to the raiſing, improving, and accompliſhing our Natures. And this is the very Caſe of the Virtue I am treating of. For certainly nothing can be more divine than Love and Charity; nothing more god-like than doing Good. From whence we may juſtly conclude, not only that it is God's Will we ſhould imitate him herein, but that we ſhould be particularly careful to attain ſo great an Excellence, to arrive at ſo divine a Perfection. Thus far, then, our Obligations reach as we are *Men*, directed only by the Light of Nature, and inſtructed by Reaſon.

We are next to conſider ourſelves as Chriſtians, in which View we ſhall find our Obligations carried to a much greater Height. Thoſe *kind Affections* with which Nature and Reaſon jointly inſpire us, are by Chriſtianity exalted into *brotherly Love*; we are not to look upon ourſelves

* Mat. v. 45. † Pſ. lxviii. 19. ciii. 4.

as

as bound only by the Ties of Humanity; we are not to consider our fellow Christians barely as Partakers of the same Nature, but as *Brethren*, in the highest and most sacred Sense; as Members of the same Body, as Partakers of the same Redemption, and Coheirs of everlasting Life. These Considerations bind us in a peculiar manner to *brotherly Love*. And accordingly the Gospel every where enjoins and inculcates it with great Strictness. * *This is the Message*, says the Apostle, *that ye heard from the Beginning that we should love one another*. And indeed it is evident that Christ and his Apostles, from the Beginning to the End of their Ministry, breathed nothing but the purest Love, and most *fervent Charity*. They earnestly exhorted and urged Men to it, and laid the utmost Stress on it upon all Occasions.—It is stiled by the Apostle † *the royal Law*; it is represented as ‖ *the End of the Commandment*, or, in other Words, as the main Scope and Drift of the Christian Institution. It is said to be ** *the Bond of Perfectness*, and †† *the fulfilling of the Law*. Our blessed Saviour not only most emphatically calls it ‖‖ *his Commandment*, but makes Choice of it as the most proper Badge and Characteristick of his Followers. *† *By this*, says he, *shall all Men know that ye are my Disciples, if you love one another*. Thereby plainly informing us, that it is not only an indispensible Duty, but a Virtue of the highest Rank, and the most essential Quality of

* 1 John iii. 11. † Jam. ii. 8. ‖ 1 Tim. i. 5. ** Col. iii. 14. †† Rom. xiii. 10. ‖‖ John xv. 12. *† Ib. xiii. 35.

a Chriſtian.—And as Chriſt has given us ſuch Precepts concerning Love and Charity, ſo he was himſelf the higheſt and moſt perfect Example of it, that ever appear'd in the World. Thoſe Characters, however illuſtrious, which I hinted at before, were as much beneath his, in all Reſpects, as the Gentile Morality was inferior to the Doctrines of the Goſpel. Whenever we ſeriouſly reflect, who he was, and what we were, and conſider at the ſame Time what he did, and what he ſuffered, from firſt to laſt, for the ſinful and unworthy Race of Mankind; we immediately diſcover that there never was upon Earth any Love like his; a Love ſo active, ſo intenſe, ſo unlimited, and ſo divine, that no Words are able to expreſs it, no Thoughts to conceive it.

Having thus conſider'd our Obligations, as Men, and as Chriſtians to perform this Duty; I might proceed to obſerve, and lament the Deficiency and Diſproportion of our Practice. I might alſo point out the chief Cauſes and Occaſions of it, and endeavour to lay down ſuch Rules, as ſeemed to conduce moſt to the promoting of Benevolence and brotherly Love: But the Remainder of my Time not allowing of many Particulars, I only beg Leave to inſiſt upon one, and to offer an Expedient, which tho' perhaps leſs regarded, yet ſeems to be of very great Importance.

What I mean is, that we would carefully guard our Minds againſt that *Spirit of Party* which uſually prevails ſo much among us, and to which we ſeem ſo unaccountably addicted.

It

It muſt indeed be confeſs'd, that it is of late conſiderably abated, and good Reaſon have we to rejoice at it. But then we ſhould not neglect it upon this Account; on the contrary, we ſhould look upon this as a fair Opportunity of exerting ourſelves, and expelling it quite from among us. Since our Diſtemper has remitted, it may now be more eaſily dealt with. We ſhould therefore uſe our utmoſt Endeavours to perfect a Cure, and prevent a Relapſe. It may be juſtly queſtion'd, whether there be any Impediment to Love and Charity greater and more powerful than this; and therefore nothing is more to be wiſh'd than an entire Removal of it.

In order whereto, we ſhould do well to conſider, what various Miſchiefs and Miſeries attend it, how many Ways it tends to diſturb our Happineſs, and embitter our Lives.—And here it were eaſy to ſhew, how unavoidably it deſtroys the *Peace of our Minds*, by introducing needleſs Diſquietudes and Vexations, by kindling the moſt troubleſome Paſſions, and blowing up the Coals of Strife and Contention.—It were eaſy to ſhew, how deeply it injures our *Reputations*, by occaſioning a mutual Propagation of Calumny and Slander; by cauſing the faireſt Actions to be miſrepreſented and diſcoloured, by rendering it almoſt impoſſible for any Man, with his utmoſt Endeavours, to give a general Content, or even gain any Approbation out of his own Party.——I might alſo obſerve how it tends to corrupt our very *Underſtandings*; as it infuſes into them innumerable Prejudices, and thereby vitiates our Judgments; as it draws them off from

from the Evidence of Things, and repreſents to them Queſtions and Facts in a falſe Light; as it renders them pliant, and ductile, and eaſy to be deluded; as it inures them to embrace notorious Falſhoods, and digeſt the moſt palpable Abſurdities.——— But more eſpecially we ſhould conſider, how ill an Effect it has on our *Morals*. It leſſens our Concern for Things of great Moment, and increaſes it for Matters of no Conſequence. It inclines us to Bigotry and Superſtition. It tends to confound the very Diſtinctions of Good and Evil. It undermines Juſtice and Mercy, the main Pillars of all Religion. It roots up our kind Affections, and good Diſpoſitions; and inſtead of them fills our Hearts with Rage and Rancour. In ſhort, this Party Spirit eats into our Breaſts like a Cancer; corrupts and poiſons our beſt Humours; and in a great meaſure devours that Love and Good-Will, which is the chief Ornament of our Minds, and the Glory of our Natures.

Nor is it leſs injurious to the Public, than private Perſons. It is evident from the Nature of the Thing, and from what has been already obſerved, that nothing can have a greater Tendency to embroil a State, and throw it into the utmoſt Diſorder. As ſure as Love and Unity is the great Bond of Society, ſo ſure is Diviſion and Strife the Bane of it. Thoſe jarring Aims, and interfering Motions which are produced by it, muſt neceſſarily occaſion Stops and Breaches among the Wheels

of

805

of Government. And if it riſe high, and be of long Continuance, the beſt and firmeſt Conſtitution in the World muſt at laſt ſink under it.——But let us appeal to Fact and Experience. Does not this abundantly inform us, that where Party-*Strife is, there is Confuſion and every evil Work?* Has it not ſometimes thrown us into the moſt dangerous Ferments? Has it not put the Kingdom into Flames, that no Body knew how to extinguiſh? and which in Spite of all Endeavours, have continued and raged on to the next Generation?—— It is with good Reaſon believed, that this Kingdom can only fall by its own Hands. So kind have Nature and Providence been to us; ſuch is our Situation, and ſo great our Strength; that if ever we come to Ruin, if ever we be *brought to Deſolation*, it muſt be by being *divided againſt our ſelves.* By that inteſtine Strife which preys upon our Vitals, and cuts the very Sinews of Government.——Next to the Love of our whole Species, our ſtrongeſt Obligations are to the Love of our Country. And accordingly it is deeply rooted in our Natures, and hardly to be effaced by Time or Accident. What Pity it is ſo noble a Paſſion ſhould ever degenerate, and dwindle into Affection for a Party?

Should it be enquired, what it is that thus ſtraitens our Minds, and contracts our Inclinations; I believe this Miſchief would be found originally owing to Vanity and Self-Love. For how comes it to paſs that we are ſo much

pleaſed

pleaſed with thoſe of our own Party? Becauſe they ſubſcribe to our Sentiments, and think as we do. And why are we ſo much offended at the Adverſary? Becauſe he rejects our Opinions, and follows his own. And what does all this amount to, but a Compliment paid to our own Underſtandings? It is not otherwiſe to be conceived, how the Opinions of others come to affect us, either with ſo much Complacency, or Diſpleaſure.

To theſe Conſiderations give me only leave to add, what naturally offers it ſelf to our Thoughts at this Time. As nothing can be more ſeaſonable, nothing more dutiful; ſo I humbly ſuppoſe, nothing could be more acceptable to our Gracious Sovereign, in this Beginning of his Reign, than for his Subjects to make him a joint Sacrifice of all their remaining Feuds and Animoſities. How juſt and ſolid a Pleaſure would it give him, to ſee all Diſcord, all Variance at an End; and the Hearts of his whole People knit together in the Bonds of mutual Affection? Such a Period put to our domeſtick Diſſentions, would not only contribute to his Repoſe; would not only make his Crown ſit eaſy upon his Head; but very much add to the Luſtre of it. Nay it would redound more to his Glory, than holding the Balance of *Europe*, and being the awful Umpire of contending Kingdoms.

And as to our ſelves, what can be more beneficial, what more deſirable? are they not our Differences and Diviſions, that chiefly, at any Time,

Time, obſtruct our Happineſs? is not this the very Evil, that lately hung over us, like a thick Cloud, and darkned our Proſpect? A Proſpect both then and now filled with ſuch Bleſſings, as not only intimately affect us, but promiſe Security and Happineſs to many diſtant Generations. If our Laws, our Liberties, our Religion be dear to us, we cannot but rejoice to ſee them ſo firmly guarded, and ſtrongly fenced. To ſee the Throne filled by a Prince, who along with the Crown and Dignity of his Royal Father, inherits his high Qualities, and Kingly Endowments; who greatly approves and admires our happy Conſtitution; who is cordially devoted to the Welfare of his People, and attached to them by Inclination, and Affection, no leſs than by Intereſt. To ſee likewiſe round about the Throne a hopeful, and numerous Progeny, blooming in all the Gifts of Nature, and bleſſed with all the Advantages of Education; from their Infancy formed to every Thing praiſe-worthy, by a Princeſs of the greateſt Virtue, and moſt conſummate Wiſdom. Theſe, and the like Bleſſings, how we may prize, now we have them, I ſhall not pretend to ſay; but moſt certainly if we had them not, we ſhould deſire them above all Things, and think them of ineſtimable Value.

Upon the whole, if we have any Regard to our own Welfare, or the Intereſt of our Poſterity; if we bear any true Love to our King, or our Country; let us make it appear by entirely putting an end to our unhappy Diviſions.

Let us no longer exaſperate each other by virulent Words, and opprobrious Terms of Diſtinction; by injurious Actions, or diſobliging Treatment; but *be kindly affectioned one to another with Brotherly Love.* Let us diſtinguiſh our Selves no otherwiſe, than by being perfectly well affected to our excellent Conſtitution in Church and State, and to Him who happily preſides over both. And let no other Strife be prolonged among us, except who ſhall be moſt zealous and active in the Service of the Public. This we may ſurely do, without engaging in any Party: provided we do but take Care to live peaceably and charitably with thoſe who have the Misfortune to be otherwiſe minded. We are obliged* *in Meekneſs* and Gentleneſs *to inſtruct thoſe who oppoſe themſelves.* This is the Chriſtian Rule; and no Difference of Opinion how wide ſoever, can ever juſtify our Departure from it.——To conclude, let us unanimouſly *follow after the Things that make for Peace.* And ſince we are bleſs'd with the beſt Conſtitution, and the pureſt Religion in the World; and with the faireſt Hopes of a long Enjoyment of Both: Since Divine Providence has diſtinguiſhed us by numberleſs Mercies and Favours, above all the Nations round about us; let us ſhew our Selves grateful by a wiſe, a virtuous, and a peaceable Conduct; and ſtudy henceforward to *walk worthy of the Vocation wherewith we are called.*

* 2 Tim. ii. 25.

10 FE 58

F I N I S.

009

BOOKS printed for J. Pemberton.

1. A Collection of Tracts, Moral and Theological, placed in the Order wherein they were firſt publiſh'd, *viz.* I. A Letter to a Deiſt. II. The Foundation of moral Goodneſs. III. The Second Part of the Foundation of moral goodneſs. IV. Divine Rectitude. V. A Second Letter to a Deiſt. VI. The Law of Truth. With ſome additional Notes, and a Supplement concerning Rectitude. By *John Balguy*, M. A. Vicar of *North-Alerton*, in the County of *York*; and Prebendary of *Sarum*. Price 6*s*.

N. B. *Any of the aforeſaid Tracts may be had ſeparate.*

2. Biſhop *Sherlock*'s Uſe and Intent of Prophecy in the ſeveral Ages of the World; in ſix Diſcourſes, deliver'd at the *Temple-Church* in *April* and *May* 1724. Publiſh'd at the Deſire of the Maſters of the Bench of the two honourable Societies. To which are added, Four Diſſerations, *viz.* 1. The Authority of the Second Epiſtle of St. *Peter*. 2. The Senſe of the Ancients before Chriſt, upon the Circumſtances and Conſequences of the Fall. 3. The

Bleſſings of *Judah*, Gen. xlix. 4. Chriſt's Entry into *Jeruſalem*. The Third Edition. Price 4*s*. 6*d*.

3. The natural Obligations to believe the Principles of Religion and divine Revelation; in 16 Sermons preach'd in the Church of *St. Mary le Bow*, *London*, in the Year 1717 and 1718, at the Lecture founded by the honourable *Robert Boyle*, Eſq; By the Right Rev. Dr. *John Leng*, late Lord Biſhop of *Norwich*. The Second Edition. Price 5*s*. 6*d*.

4. The pretended Difficulties in natural or reveal'd Religion no Excuſe for Infidelity; in 16 Sermons, preach'd in the Church of *St. Mary le Bow*, *London*, in the Years 1721 and 1722, at the Lecture founded by the honourable *Robert Boyle*, Eſq; The Second Edition. To which is ſubjoin'd, a Defence of the Chriſtian Religion, from the Prophecies of the Old Teſtament. By *Brampton Gurdon*, A. M. Archdeacon of *Sudbury*. Price 5*s*. 6*d*.

5. An Abridgment of Mr. *Locke*'s Eſſay concerning human Underſtanding. By the Right Reverend Dr. *John Wynne*, Lord Biſhop of *Bath* and *Wells*. The fourth Edition, corrected. Price 3*s*.

6. The *Roman* Hiſtory of *Caius Velleius Paterculus*. In Two Books. Tranſlated from

the *Oxford* Edition, and collated with all the former ones of note. To which is prefix'd a Character of the Author and his Writings: Extracted from Monſieur *Bayle* and others. By *T. Newcomb, M. A.* Chaplain to his Grace the Duke of *Richmond.* The Second Edition. Price 2*s.* 6*d.*

7. *Tully*'s three Books of Offices, tranſlated into *Engliſh*, with Notes explaining the Method and Meaning of the Author. By *Thomas Cockman*, D. D. Maſter of Univerſity-College in *Oxford.* The Fifth Edition. Price 3*s.*

8. Memoirs of the Count *de Forbin*, Commodore in the Navy of *France*, and Knight of the Order of St. *Lewis*; containing his Narrative of the Voyages he made to the *Eaſt-Indies*, &c. and of the great Honours paid to him at the Court of *Siam*, where he was preferr'd to be the King's High Admiral, Generaliſſimo of his Troops, and Governor of the Tower of *Bancock*; his particular Account of the Battel of *La Hogue*, and other Fights that he was engag'd in during 44 Years that he ſpent in the Sea-Service; and his ſecret Hiſtory of the Chevalier *de St. George*'s Expedition in the Year 1708. from *Dunkirk* to *Scotland*, in which he had the ſpecial Charge of the Chevalier's Perſon. Tranſlated from the *French.* The Second Edition. Price 5*s.* 6*d.*

9. The

9. The Hiſtory of the late Revolutions in *Perſia*, taken from the Memoirs of Father *Kruſinski*, Procurator of the Jeſuits at *Iſpahan*, who liv'd 20 Years in that Country, was employ'd by the Biſhop of *Iſpahan* in his Negotiations at the *Perſian* Court, for the Emperor and the King of *France*, and was familiarly converſant with the greateſt Men of all Parties. Done into *Engliſh*, from the Original juſt publiſh'd with the Royal Licenſe at *Paris*, by Father *du Cerceau*, who has prefix'd a Map of *Perſia*; and a ſhort Hiſtory of the *Sophies*; with curious Remarks on the Accounts given by *Tavernier*, Sir *John Chardin*, and other Writers that have treated particularly of that Government and Country, *&c.* In Two Volumes. Price 7*s.* 6*d.*

10. A Journey thro' the *Auſtrian Netherlands*, containing the modern Hiſtory and Deſcription of all the Provinces, Towns, Caſtles, Palaces, Monaſteries, *&c.* of that fruitful, populous Country; with an Account of all the remarkable Battels and Sieges, taken from the moſt authentick Narratives; to which is prefix'd an Introduction, containing the antient Hiſtory of the whole 17 Provinces. The Second Edition. Price 3*s.* 6*d.*

10 FE 58